



Asymptomatic Staff Testing in Primary Schools and Nurseries

Frequently asked questions

Aims and Objectives of Asymptomatic Testing

What are the objectives of the Government's asymptomatic testing strategy in education settings?

The Government's asymptomatic testing strategy will help to break the chains of transmission of coronavirus (Covid-19) in education settings by identifying asymptomatic positive cases. Those who test positive will then self-isolate, helping to reduce transmission of the virus.

The asymptomatic testing programme does not replace the Government's current testing policy for those with symptoms. Primary school, junior school, and early years nursery staff who experience symptoms of Covid-19 should self-isolate immediately and arrange a test.

Why is asymptomatic testing being introduced?

Up to one in three people who have the virus have it without symptoms (they are asymptomatic) so could be spreading the disease unknowingly. Rapid asymptomatic testing means that we can now introduce testing of staff twice a week.

This is a significant development that will help to identify positive cases more quickly and break the chains of transmissions. Primary schools, junior schools, maintained nursery schools, schools-based nurseries and private, voluntary and independent (PVI) nurseries must continue to put in place a range of protective measures to minimise the risk of infection spread.

Adults and young people that fall into the clinically extremely vulnerable group should continue to follow the [Guidance on shielding and protecting extremely vulnerable persons](#).

Is participation compulsory?

The Department for Education expects all primary schools, junior schools, school based nurseries, private, voluntary and independent (PVI) nurseries and maintained nursery schools will want to participate and offer at home test kits to staff. It is voluntary for staff to participate.

Once staff understand the testing process and read a privacy notice, if they choose to participate they are committing to self-administer the test and provide their results. Schools should ensure that staff provide their results (positive, negative or void) to NHS Test and Trace via the [self-report gov.uk page](#). Results should also be shared with school / nursery to support local contact tracing.

Staff who decline to participate can still attend school or nursery. Staff who decline to participate in this testing programme should follow the usual national guidelines on self-isolation and anyone showing symptoms should [get tested](#).

Can staff who have opted out join the testing programme at any point?

Yes. The school/nursery should share the privacy notice and relevant materials with that member of staff when they choose to participate.

What settings are included in this testing programme?

All staff working in:

- local-authority-maintained primary schools - including mainstream, special and pupil referral units (PRUs)
- primary academies - including special academies and alternative provision free schools
- junior schools
- non-maintained special schools
- independent primary schools - including independent special schools and independent alternative provision
- hospital schools
- school-based nurseries
- maintained nursery schools
- (from mid March) private, voluntary and independent (PVI) nurseries

Staff working in 'all-through schools' and middle schools should be tested through the secondary school testing programme.

Pupils' Return to Primary Schools

Why are you not testing primary pupils on return?

Public Health England have advised there are currently limited public health benefits attached to testing primary pupils with lateral flow devices. Primary age pupils, particularly younger children, may find the LFD testing process unpleasant and are unable to self-swab. For these reasons there are no plans to pilot LFD testing. We will review this approach in the light of any emerging evidence.

Difference between primary and secondary testing programmes

Why do primary and early years staff still need to take a confirmatory PCR test if secondary do not?

In line with clinical advice, confirmatory PCR testing will remain in place for primary school staff as testing is done at home, in line with other self-reporting settings.

Does the decision to pause daily contact testing in secondary schools and colleges impact primary schools and nurseries?

There is no change to the rollout of regular testing for staff using rapid lateral flow tests in primary schools, schools-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools. Staff will continue to be tested twice weekly, 3-4 days apart. We will review the findings of the PHE and NHS Test and Trace evaluation of daily contact testing and use these to determine next steps.

Early years

Which EY settings are included as part of the primary school testing rollout?

School-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools are included in the primary school testing rollout.

What about Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers?

On 22 February we announced the asymptomatic testing programme in education will expand to staff in all private, voluntary and independent (PVI) nurseries, who will start to receive deliveries of Lateral Flow Device (LFD) home testing kits to offer to all their staff for twice weekly testing from mid March.

I'm a nursery: can we test staff on site since staff are in work more often than in primaries?

No, nurseries are being issued with kits for use at home as part of the education testing programme. Using these kits at home is recommended because if the test is positive, the risk of transmission on site is reduced. These home test kits are manufactured specifically for testing at home. They are accompanied by specific instructions for use in this setting.

Why are some early years settings included in the primary programme but not others?

The most efficient way of providing asymptomatic testing to some of the EY sector is to include schools-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools in the primary school rollout. PVIs will start to receive deliveries of home testing kits from mid March. Childminders should continue accessing local community testing programmes. More information can be found [here](#).

Testing: participation

How will the testing work?

Primary school and nursery staff will be supplied with at home Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test kits which they will be able to use twice weekly 3-4 days apart before coming into work, ideally in the morning. The LFDs supplied do not require laboratory processing and can provide a quick result in about 30 minutes.

Testing is voluntary and they will not need to produce a negative test result, or provide proof of having taken a test, to return to work in person. However, testing is strongly encouraged.

LFD tests have been widely and successfully used to detect asymptomatic COVID 19 cases. The speed and convenience of the tests supports the detection of the virus in asymptomatic individuals, who would not otherwise have got tested. LFD tests are approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and are crucial in the fight against the virus.

The asymptomatic testing programme does not replace current testing policy for those with symptoms. Anyone with symptoms, whether they are involved in the asymptomatic testing programme or not, will still be expected to obtain a PCR test and follow NHS Test and Trace Guidance, self-isolating until they have received their results.

Schools, nurseries and staff must continue with all current protective measures – asymptomatic testing does not replace these controls or make these less important in controlling the virus.

How accurate is a lateral flow device test?

Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests have been widely and successfully used to detect COVID-19 in asymptomatic individuals. No test is perfect, but the speed and convenience of LFD tests supports detection of the virus in asymptomatic individuals who would not otherwise be tested. LFD tests are approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and are crucial in the fight against the virus.

Extensive clinical evaluation has been carried out on the lateral flow tests. Evaluations from Public Health England and the University of Oxford show these tests are accurate and sensitive enough to be used in the community for screening and surveillance purposes.

LFD tests identify individuals who are likely to be infectious. These individuals tend to spread the virus to many people and so identifying by LFD remains important.

It is also important to remember that these tests are an additional layer of health protection measure in addition to face coverings, social distancing etc.

How often should primary and nursery staff take a test?

Staff should take the test twice weekly at home 3-4 days apart. If staff work part-time or have irregular attendance, they should still take a test twice weekly as above. Peripatetic staff should choose one school/nursery from where they will collect their home test kits.

When should school and nursery staff do the testing? Mornings vs evening? Is weekend testing allowed?

Staff should test twice weekly 3-4 days apart before coming into work, ideally in the morning. If staff cannot take the test in the morning, they should take it as soon as possible before coming into work. Staff can test on a Sunday evening

Do staff working from home need to take a test if they never attend school/nursery in person?

No: the test kits are only for those working on school / nursery premises that might unknowingly infect others.

Should I still take part in the asymptomatic testing programme if I have recently tested positive for COVID-19?

If staff have recently (within 90 days) had a positive PCR test for COVID-19, they are likely to have developed some immunity. Individuals are exempt from testing by both PCR and LFD within 90 days of a positive PCR test, unless they develop new symptoms.

However, individuals may choose to take a LFD test after the isolation period, for example as part of a workplace or community testing programme. This should only be done after completion of the required self-isolation period as per [the NHS stay at home guidance](#). If they test positive with a LFD test, they will be required to self-isolate for 10 days or longer if symptomatic.

They are still required to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of a positive case, even if this is within the 90 day window.

Will we have to opt in to receive the test kit supplies?

As part of its operational guidance, DHSC has set out a legal agreement with terms and conditions that schools will agree to by participating. The Primary Schools Agreement Rapid Testing Rollout is available on the primary [schools document sharing platform](#). No specific steps need to be taken to sign-up to receive the first delivery of test kits. Guidance on how to reorder supplies can now be found on the same document sharing platform [here](#).

Further information about test kits supplies for PVI nurseries will be available soon.

How should schools/nurseries distribute the supply of test kits?

It is advisable that staff are given allocated time slots for collecting their test kits to maintain social distancing and to avoid queues and crowding. Staff who distribute kits and those collecting kits should maintain social distancing and wear appropriate face covering in line with national guidance.

How should headteachers/nursery leaders brief their staff?

Leaders may want to take staff through the materials supplied on the document sharing portal and testing instructions for use (v 1.3.2), including the 'How to Guide' and the 'how to self test' video, as a group to give consistent messaging. The format of the briefing should comply with national guidelines on social distancing.

What should you do if you are contacted by NHS Test and Trace?

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.

Anyone who displays symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) can and should get a PCR test. Tests can be booked online through the [NHS website](#) or ordered by telephone via NHS 119 for those without access to the internet.

Testing: general

Will the existing testing service remain open?

The Government's normal testing service for symptomatic individuals will continue. This is the foundation of our testing strategy. It is the most effective way to know if staff are positive and need to self-isolate. If staff have symptoms, they should continue to book a test via the [NHS Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) service](#) or by calling 119 in England and Wales, or 0300 303 2713 in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Can my family get tested too?

No, this asymptomatic LFD testing is aimed at staff in primary schools and nurseries. The tests will be handed to staff for personal use and should not be used for anyone else. Family members of staff 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 get tested if I have 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, staff will help to stop the spread of the virus, protect other people, and save lives.

Should someone who has been vaccinated take a LFD test?

Yes, we do not yet know whether vaccines prevent individuals transmitting the virus. If staff have been vaccinated, they should continue to follow the steps set out in this guidance. The vaccine does not interfere with the LFD or PCR tests.

Why would I 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, staff 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 if they test negative using the at-home LFD tests. By detecting more asymptomatic cases, schools can avoid unnecessary staff shortages through staff unwittingly infecting others.

What impact does this testing have on protective measures on schools?

All existing protective measures set out in [guidance](#) (e.g. social distancing, handwashing, face coverings where needed, bubbles) remain important and the need for these is not lessened. A negative LFD result should not be read as a means to relax or ignore social distancing or other virus prevention measures intended to reduce transmission – LFD is an additional tool that contributes to reducing risk.

Test process: results

What happens if a staff member's lateral flow test result is negative?

Staff with a negative LFD result can continue to attend school or nursery after logging their result with NHS T & T. We recommend that they also inform their school or nursery of their result. Individuals who test negative must continue to follow national and local guidelines including regular handwashing, social distancing and wearing face coverings, where required.

If a staff member has had positive PCR test followed by a negative LFD test taken at home, can they end self-isolation?

No, individuals must continue to self-isolate. The at home LFD tests are not approved to allow release from self-isolation. Note if an individual has had a positive PCR they should self-isolate and not take an LFD test for their period of isolation.

What happens if a staff member's lateral flow test result is positive?

Individuals with a positive LFD result will need to self-isolate immediately in line with the [stay-at-home guidance](#). They should report their results to NHS Test and Trace as soon as the test is complete, as set out in the test kit instructions and [self-report gov.uk page](#). This will enable NHS Test and Trace to monitor the spread of the virus.

They should also inform their school or nursery of their result so the school can identify close contacts and they can make appropriate cover arrangements. They must book a confirmatory PCR test online, then continue to isolate as per the [stay at-home guidance](#) if the PCR test result is positive. The staff member should also inform their school or nursery of a positive PCR result.

What happens if staff have a positive LFD test at home but the follow up PCR is then negative?

If you have a negative PCR test following a positive LFD test, you and your household can stop isolating as per the [NHS stay at home guidance](#).

What should happen to contacts of staff who have a positive LFD test and a positive confirmatory PCR test?

Schools should follow their existing policy in identifying close contacts of positive cases that would need to self-isolate.

When should self-isolation of an asymptomatic case commence from?

If staff are asymptomatic, the self-isolation should start as soon as the LFD test taken at home shows a positive result, in line with the [NHS stay at home guidance](#). They should arrange a confirmatory PCR as soon as possible.

What happens if a staff member's lateral flow test result is void/invalid?

If staff get a void result, this means that the test has not run correctly, and they will need to take another test as soon as possible, ideally on the same day. Staff should still report the void result to NHS Test and Trace via the [self-report gov.uk page](#). They should use a new test kit but not reuse anything from the first kit. In the very unlikely event staff get two void test results, they should book a

PCR test. In this instance, staff do not need to self-isolate pending the result of the PCR test. Staff should inform their school/nursery as it may indicate a faulty batch of test kits.

Do test results get affected by brushing teeth, drinking water?

Avoid eating or drinking half an hour before the test. A small amount of water is acceptable. There is unlikely to be an adverse impact of brushing teeth prior to testing but it might be prudent to wait a while before testing.

How should primary schools and nurseries manage close contacts of those who have positive LFDs tests?

Schools/nurseries should send home those people who have been in close contact with the person who has tested positive, as defined in the [actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak guidance or actions for early years and childcare providers guidance](#). Those who have come into close contact with staff who have a positive LFD result should isolate straight away rather than waiting for the staff member's confirmatory positive PCR test. The staff member's household should also isolate immediately after the staff member is informed of the positive LFD result, as per the [stay-at-home guidance](#).

If schools would like support on the action they should take to respond to a positive case, they can contact the dedicated advice service introduced by Public Health England (PHE) and delivered by the NHS Business Services Authority. This can be reached by calling the DfE Helpline on 0800 046 8687 and selecting option 1 for advice on the action to take in response to a positive case. This is outlined in the [actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak guidance. or actions for early years and childcare providers guidance](#).

How to manage primary bubbles: what happens to the teacher's bubble of pupils / other close contacts if they test positive?

Where there is a positive case, not all members of the teacher's 'bubble' / group will be asked to self-isolate. Schools/nurseries should only send home any pupils who have come into close contact with the teacher as defined in the [actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak guidance](#)

Components of LFD tests

Are the swabs latex free?

The manufacturer has confirmed that Innova swabs are latex free.

Does the LFD test contain any harmful substances and are there any precautions for dealing with spillages?

Extraction solution which comes with the LFD test kit contains the following components: Na_2HPO_4 (disodium hydrogen phosphate), NaH_2PO_4 (sodium phosphate monobasic), NaCl (Sodium Chloride). These components do not have any hazard labels associated with them, and the manufacturer states that there are no hazards anticipated if individuals follow the instructions for use.

Any spillages should be wiped with a paper towel and if the solution included the throat and nose sample, the area should be appropriately disinfected using household disinfectant.

Do the LFD tests contain animal products or have they been tested on animals?

All of the antibodies are necessarily generated from animal cells. While we do not test any of these products on animals, nor are animals harmed in the development process, the antibodies used for the test reaction are derived using an animal cell in the laboratory. The T line for a positive test is derived by reaction between the sample as it flows to the membrane (thin paper like material inside the device) which is coated with these antibodies. It is therefore highly unlikely for there to be any direct contact between the person being tested and the animal material itself.

However, we want to make sure that the people undertaking the test make an informed choice about this.

Are the LFD tests vegan?

The monoclonal antibody technology present in our lateral flow devices are generated from animal cells. During development, at no time have any component parts been tested on animals.

Are the LFD tests halal?

No animal products have been used in the production of the swabs. The swab is the only material with which the individual will come into direct contact. The individual using the test will not come into direct contact with any materials made from animal products.

The thin paper like material inside the LFD is coated with antibodies from animal cells. No direct contact will be made between the person and this material. The monoclonal antibody technology present in our lateral flow devices are generated from animal cells. This is in common with other tests of this kind, including commercially available pregnancy tests.

Is the LFD test safe for those that are pregnant?

Yes, the tests are safe to use by those who are pregnant.

Supplies

Our boxes have arrived! Does each blue box only contain 1 test kit? Or do we open them to reveal more than one in each little blue box?

Each individual box has 7 tests. Please give one box of 7 per staff member plus the new Instructions For Use.

What happens if we are not able to receive the delivery for some reason?

The delivery partner will reattempt delivery in the next possible timeslot.

What do I do if my school/nursery has not received their kit?

To report any missing or damaged items, please complete this [contact form](#).

Further information on when PVI nurseries can expect their kits will be available shortly.

How and when will test kits/ be provided

Primary schools, schools-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools will have received their initial delivery of test kits. These test kits are for the twice weekly at home testing of staff. The

number of test kits that each school/nursery will receive has been estimated based on the number of staff.

Further information on the delivery of test kits to PVI nurseries will be available soon.

How do we reorder supplies?

The test kits are expected to last up to three and a half weeks based on staff testing twice a week. Guidance on how to reorder supplies can now be found on the document sharing platform [here](#).

Record keeping and reporting

What record keeping does the school or nursery need to do?

Schools/nurseries should keep a test kit log, where they record which individual has taken which kits home. This is required in the unlikely event of an incident requiring investigation or batch recall. This log will also help record that staff have received the new instructions for use. This should be separate from the results register for data protection reasons. A template is provided on the document sharing platform [here](#).

Schools/nurseries should also keep a record of staff tests results. This will help with contact tracing, since schools/nurseries cannot view staff results otherwise. A template record is provided on the document sharing platform [here](#).

If the individual follows the instructions in the home test kits, they must then record and share their result (whether positive, negative or void) with NHS Test and Trace.

How long should primary schools/nurseries keep the Covid-19 staff data?

As outlined in the privacy notice, the school/nursery should retain its test kit log and COVID 19 results register for a period of twelve (12) months from the date of the last entries made by the school into them.

How and when do I report my result to NHS Test & Trace?

Individuals should ensure that they provide their result (positive, negative or void) to NHS Test and Trace. There are two ways staff can report their result. They can report online by visiting <http://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result>. Alternatively they can report via telephone - Lines are open every day, 7am to 11pm. +England, Wales and Northern Ireland: 119; Scotland: 0300 303 2713.

Why do I need to share information on LFD test results both with NHS Test & Trace and my school/nursery?

It is a requirement to share results with NHS Test & Trace so that contact tracing (particularly outside the school environment can take place) and clinical evaluation of the testing programme can continue. Staff should share results with their school so that if positive, immediate contact tracing can take place in school. Void and negative results are useful information for their school both to monitor stocks of kits and to identify any particular issues that might need escalating to DfE or NHS Test & Trace.

Use of equipment

How will staff know what to do with the at home test kits?

Detailed information how to self-swab and process the tests is in the Instructions for Use (please check this is version 1.3.2 – dated 15 January 2021). Tests can be disposed of in the waste bag provided and then put in general household waste bins.

What specific storage arrangements are required for the test kits?

The temperature for storing LFD test kits is between 2°C and 30°C. The LFD devices and reagents must be used between 15°C and 30°C during use so must not be stored outside. If they are stored somewhere colder than 15°C, then move them to a room temperature area for around 30 minutes before use.

How should staff members dispose of their kit?

Once their test is complete, staff should put all of the used test contents in the small waste bag provided. They should seal the bag and put the bag in their bin at home – it is classified as general household waste.

Consent

Do you need consent to process the personal data required for testing?

Primary schools, schools-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools will need to satisfy themselves that they have a lawful basis for processing personal data. Primary schools will provide staff with a privacy notice (which is provided as a [template](#) on the document sharing platform) explaining what personal data is required to participate in the programme.

Workforce, funding and insurance

How are staff defined in primary schools and nurseries?

The primary, schools-based nursery and maintained nursery school workforce includes all staff who are working in these settings including contractors or peripatetic staff. Schools and nurseries should also offer testing to other staff members, such as clinical practitioners, therapists, other support staff, caterers, volunteers and those supporting with wraparound childcare to children attending school. Some staff (particularly those employed through the NHS) may have separate arrangements for regular testing.

If a staff member receives regular (twice weekly) testing in another setting i.e. NHS should they still take part in school?

If a staff member is participating in asymptomatic testing in a different setting, they do not need to participate in asymptomatic testing simultaneously in the school/nursery setting.

What are the duties of those undertaking the staff testing roles?

Prior to commencing their roles, staff must read the guidance and familiarise themselves with their roles. The two roles that each school or nursery will require are a 'Covid Coordinator and a 'Registration Assistant'.

The Covid Coordinator / Programme Management responsibilities cover the overall management of Covid self-testing programme at the school or nursery, including:

- engagement and communication with staff and parents
- ensuring staff are using the right instructions and that they sign for the test kits using the 'Test Kit Log'
- reporting incidents and carry out risk management
- storing and reporting any required data
- reordering tests when required (advice on how to do this will follow)

The Registration Assistant duties cover:

- distributing the correct number of test kits and managing the distribution schedule
- working with the Covid Coordinator/Programme manager to manage the stock of kits
- recording self-reported result for weekly testing on their COVID_19 Test Register.
- sending reminders to staff [report their results online](#) and to their school or nursery
- responding to staff questions about testing

How long are staff expected to spend in these roles?

The size of the school and its workforce will dictate how long the activities set out under the Registration Assistant and Covid Coordinator roles take. It is advisable that staff are given allocated time slots for test-kit pick up, to maintain social distancing and to avoid queues and crowding. Therefore, we expect that the initial set-up, including registration of staff and distribution of tests, will take up to 2 days. We anticipate that the regular input of staff test results to the Covid-19 test register will take up to 1 day, spread over the course of a working week.

Will my school/nursery have costs reimbursed?

Primary school, junior school and schools-based nursery and maintained nursery school staff will be supplied with at home Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test kits which they will be able to use before coming into work. The home testing offer is intended to make the process as simple to manage as possible, minimising the demands placed on school and nursery workforces to deliver their staff testing programme. The responsibilities of the programme (Covid Coordinator and Registration Assistant) are intended to be integrated within existing staff or volunteer structures. We do not expect additional staffing costs to be incurred, as the administrative requirements for schools are relatively light. No further workforce, equipment or funding is therefore required for the administration of these tests; as a result, primary schools will not receive additional funding to carry out testing.

Has the Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) or the insurance companies who work with primary schools, school-based or maintained nursery schools confirmed that they would cover activities related to the asymptomatic testing programme, even if testing occurs at home?

The Risk Protection Arrangements (RPA) provides extensive public and employer's liability cover. The RPA would provide an indemnity to the member school for all

sums that the member school shall become legally liable to pay for damages or compensation in respect of or arising out of personal injury or damage to third party property occurring during the period the member school is a member of the RPA and in connection with the testing. Cover applies during home testing as well as testing on school premises. Risk assessments are required whether the testing is on site or in a pupil or employees' home.

If schools are insured, they should check with their insurer or their insurance broker / agent in the first instance to check the extent of cover provided for testing in the employee's own home.

Training

How much training will staff members get?

All of the information needed to allow an individual to participate in testing is included in the instructions for them. Primary schools, schools-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools and their staff can find detailed information on how to self-swab and use the at home LFD tests in the following:

- 'instructions for use' handbook (v 1.3.2)
- 'how to' guide
- YouTube video series covering a 'step to step guide to covid-19 self testing'

Transport

What if staff need to travel to school on public transport?

Staff are being provided with at home test kits which they will be encouraged to use prior to attending work. If a staff member has a negative LFD test, they can continue to use public transport. However, if a staff member tests positive with a LFD test or develops symptoms, they must isolate immediately in line with the [stay-at-home guidance and book a PCR test](#).

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