

24th February 2021

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Dear Parents and Carers,

You will of course have heard the announcements on Monday regarding the government's road map out of lockdown and what this means for the full opening of schools on the 8th March. Throughout the past year our planning has always been led by the written guidance issued by the Department of Education following all public announcements. Thankfully, on this occasion this guidance has been issued promptly allowing us to start our planning.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963541/Schools_coronavirus_operational_guidance.pdf

In this letter I want to focus on a key aspect of the government's guidance on the return of secondary age children to school which is participation in COVID Lateral Flow Device (LFD) testing. The guidance for schools states:

Secondary school testing on-site through an Asymptomatic Testing Site (ATS)

Secondary schools should offer pupils testing at an on-site ATS from 8 March. Testing and return of pupils can be phased during the first week to manage the number of pupils passing through the test site at any one time. You should offer 3 tests, 3 to 5 days apart.

Pupils should return to face-to-face education following their first negative test result. Pupils not undergoing testing should attend school in line with your phased return arrangements. Schools will have discretion on how to test students over that week as they return to the classroom.

This testing is entirely voluntary but is supported by Public Health as a key part of the battle against the pandemic. To that end the plan is that following the three onsite tests, families will be provided with home testing kits so that the children can test themselves twice a week at home with your support.

Home testing

Both pupils and staff in secondary schools will be supplied with LFD test kits to self-swab and test themselves twice a week at home. Staff and pupils must report their result to NHS Test and Trace as soon as the test is completed either online or by telephone as per the instructions in the home test kit. Staff and pupils should also share their result, whether void, positive or negative, with their school to help with contact tracing.

As already mentioned the testing is voluntary and so the first step in our planning is for us to establish how many of you consent to your child being tested and therefore how many children we will be testing over the course of that first week from the 8th March and into the second week.

You will understand that this will then inform how we can accommodate the return of all of your children to school over the course of the week beginning 8th March.

Next steps

1. We will send out information about the testing process and a consent form tomorrow, the 25th February.
2. We will be asking you to read all the information and return these forms to us by 9 a.m. Monday 1st March.
3. Using the number of 'consents' a plan will then be drawn up that accommodates the testing requirements from Monday 8th March.
4. We will issue detailed arrangements for testing appointments and return to school arrangements for your children by the end of Wednesday 3rd March.

I know we are all, as parents and educators, keen to get our children back into school as soon as possible; we only have to accommodate one more important hurdle before this is a reality.

Best wishes

Clare Costello
Headteacher

