



Dear Parent/Carer

25 February 2021

## **COVID-19 voluntary lateral flow testing for students March 2021**

Further to my letter on Tuesday 23 February, I would like to provide you with more detail regarding the voluntary 'mass asymptomatic testing' we will be implementing from 8 March.

As you are aware, we have been working hard to keep our school as safe as possible. You will no doubt have heard about the testing for those without coronavirus symptoms using the new, quicker COVID-19 tests known as 'lateral flow tests'. These tests, along with the other protective measures we are taking, will help staff and students to return to school safely. Up to one third of people who have coronavirus experience no symptoms. By testing, we will help to stop the virus spread and help to keep our school open as safely as possible. The test is voluntary, but staff and students are encouraged to take it.

We will offer testing for students at our onsite Asymptomatic Testing Site (ATS), currently located in the School Hall, from 8 March. This facility has been operational for staff and students in the Hub since mid January. Participating students will be tested 3 times (3 to 5 days apart) during the first few weeks, after which testing will take place at home. Further details will follow regarding home testing arrangements, when these are made available. We will communicate further individualised details regarding timings of tests and the return to school separately. There is no need for students who have had a positive PCR test for COVID-19 in the last 90 days to take a test.

Please see an [instructional leaflet here](#) with some more information on the testing process as well as the school's [COVID-19 Testing Privacy Statement](#).

**Please complete the relevant online form below (one per student) indicating whether or not you would like your child to be tested.** If your child is aged 16 or over, they will need to complete this form themselves, having discussed this with you. We request that all parents and students aged 16 or over complete the relevant form by **Sunday, 28 February at 6pm**, whether or not they are providing consent. We appreciate this is a short window for completion, but this will enable us to plan our ATS effectively. A form must be completed in order for a student to be tested.

Click [here](#) if your child is between 11 and 15 years of age (on 8 March 2021)

Click [here](#) if your child is 16 or over (on 8 March 2021)

On the day of their test appointments, students should (where possible) bring a smartphone to school in order to register for the test. Students will be asked to register themselves as part of this process on the NHS website using this phone. They will be guided through the registration process by our

experienced staff. If your child does not have a smartphone, our staff will register them using a school device.

Those taking the test will be supervised by trained staff. The 'lateral flow' tests are quick and easy, using a swab of your nose and throat. We recognise that the self-swabbing part of the test may cause some anxiety for some children and their families, particularly for some of those with SEND. Many of these concerns may be alleviated by discussing them with school and agreeing strategies to help reduce anxiety and putting in place any reasonable adjustments. Parents and carers may find the Mass Testing Guidance a useful source for further information ([Mass asymptomatic testing - GOV.UK](#)).

Validation studies, conducted by Oxford University and Public Health England, have shown these tests to be as accurate in identifying a case as a PCR test (99.68% specificity). The tests have lower sensitivity but they are better at picking up cases when a person has higher viral load, hence the need to test frequently.

### **What if my child tests positive?**

Participating students who test positive will be informed about their results individually. If a test result is positive, parents will be telephoned and further instructions provided. Guidance on safe travel and additional precautions will be provided along with test results. The outcome of the test will also be confirmed by the on-line NHS system.

If a student tests positive on a lateral flow device, they will need to self-isolate for 10 days and follow the guidance from NHS Test and Trace.

### **What happens if the test is negative?**

Students will be able to stay in school and resume their activities as normal. A student will not be told by the school if they test negative; the negative test outcome will, however, be confirmed later by the on-line NHS system. A small number of students may need to repeat the test if the first test was invalid or void for some reason.

### **What if my child has been in close contact with someone in school who tests positive?**

The student will be notified that they are a close contact by the school and will need to self-isolate for 10 days in line with Government guidance.

### **What if my child develops symptoms?**

This testing programme at school is for people with no symptoms. If your child develops symptoms at any time (such as 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 will support our staff and students throughout, but please contact us if you need this information in another format or if you have any questions. You can call the office on 01442 863605 or email [admin@ashlyns.herts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@ashlyns.herts.sch.uk).

Further information relating to the return to school will be sent to parents over the coming days.

Yours sincerely



**James Shapland**  
**Headteacher**