



4th January 2021

Dear Colleagues, Parents & Carers and Students

COVID-19 Mass Testing in Schools for Staff & Students

You may have seen in the news that the government is encouraging all secondary schools and colleges to participate in mass testing for COVID-19, in order to detect individuals who have the virus but do not have any symptoms. By identifying these individuals and requiring them to self-isolate, it will be possible to break some of the chains of transmission of the virus, keep our communities safer and help to keep our schools open for in-person learning. The testing process uses new, quicker COVID-19 tests known as **lateral flow tests**.

The Collegiate Trust has decided that our secondary schools, *Riddlesdown Collegiate* and *The Quest Academy*, will participate in this programme over the coming weeks. I would like to emphasise that it is then a personal choice for each member of staff and the family of each student as to whether to take part in this mass testing; individuals who remain symptom free and who are not close contacts of confirmed cases will still be able to come to school even if they do not take part in this testing programme. I should also emphasise that **these tests are only for individuals who do not have symptoms of COVID-19**; anyone who has symptoms must not come into school and must follow the instructions I provided in my letter of 28th August 2020 which can be accessed [here](#).

Alongside this testing programme, we shall continue to keep students in separate bubbles, stagger the start and end of the day, maintain the increased cleaning regimes and require all staff and students to wear masks in communal areas because social distancing is not possible there; please note that we will only consider allowing an exemption from wearing a mask as in response to a medically diagnosed condition, and in such an instance we would look to implement additional mitigations. We hope that this will help us to maintain high quality education and, therefore, I would encourage everyone to take part in this testing programme.

We expect to begin testing all participants soon, and if you wish to take part we shall inform you when you can expect your test to take place. Each participant will be tested twice, with the two tests a few days apart. If you are a parent of a student who is under 16 and are happy for your child to take part in this programme, please fill in the **registration and consent form** below which will automatically come back to us when you click on **submit**. Please note that **no student will be tested** unless the **registration and consent form has been completed**. Students who are over the age of 16 may provide their own approval after discussion with parents and should include their own digital signature on this form.

REGISTRATION AND CONSENT FORM – [Click here for link to google form](#)

Members of staff who are participating in this testing programme should also complete this form.

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. For under 18s, staff can oversee the swab process.

Included with this letter is the privacy notice which explains what happens to the data we collect on the registration and consent form and through the testing process,

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We know these tests work - in validation studies conducted by Oxford University and Public Health England, they were shown 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.

Testing will be offered free of charge.

What if the test result is positive?

Participating staff and students who test positive will be informed about their results individually. For all students the parents or legal guardians will also be notified. Guidance on safe travel and additional precautions will be provided along with test results.

Those receiving a positive test result will need to take a further PCR test (similar to those done in local and regional testing sites) on the same day (or as soon as possible). We should be able to provide these PCR test kits to perform at home or you can go to www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or call 119 to book a follow-up test. If ordering a PCR test yourselves, try to choose to visit a drive-through test site if possible, as it is faster than requesting a home test.

Whilst waiting for the PCR result (via text / email) the individual will need to self-isolate.

If the PCR test returns a **positive result** the individual **will have to self-isolate** and members of the household must follow the guidance from NHS Test and Trace.

What if the test result is negative?

The individual will be able to stay in school and resume their activities as normal.

A student will only be told if s/he tests positive on a *lateral flow test*, so if you do not hear you can assume it was negative. A small number of students may need to repeat the test if the first test was invalid or void for some reason.

What if a close contact at school tests positive?

A close contact of someone in school who has tested positive for COVID-19 will be able to return to school if they agree to be tested once a day for 7 days and the test is negative. If they do not want to take the test, they will need to self-isolate as per the national guidelines. This does not apply to household members or close contacts outside of school who will still need to self-isolate. Further details will be provided at the time, but if you would prefer to self-isolate instead of doing daily testing, you can.

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 (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) or 0300 303 2713 (Scotland) or visiting <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>.

We will support our staff and students throughout, but please contact your school if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely



Mr Gordon Smith
Chief Executive