

## MAST Testing Key Information

### What have the government said?

The government's statement on testing in schools can be seen here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/secondary-schools-and-colleges-to-get-weekly-coronavirustesting>

### What is MAST?

As you know, schools have been asked to help with the roll out of new infrastructure that offers sufficient capacity for targeted and mass asymptomatic serial testing (MAST). Tests can be conducted in community settings without a laboratory, and involve taking a nasal / throat swab which is then applied to a solution that is placed onto a small testing equipment (similar to a pregnancy test). The test result is available to read within 20-30 minutes. The test is very reliable in confirming if someone does not have COVID-19; however, a positive test is less certain, and an individual with a positive test should have a follow up PCR test to check whether they are a true positive case.

### Why is Asymptomatic Serial Testing useful?

It can:

- Identify & isolate infected people more quickly than with symptomatic PCR testing alone;
- Find asymptomatic people who would otherwise not present for a test;
- Eventually offer new routes out of isolation and back to work or education

### What have schools been asked to do?

To plan to have the following in place in January:

- Staff and students will have access to rapid testing from January to help keep them in school and college from the start of the spring term.
- All staff in secondary schools and colleges, including special schools and alternative provision, will be eligible for weekly rapid tests. This will help identify asymptomatic cases – which make up a third of all cases – limiting the spread of the virus.
- Staff and students who are close contacts of positive cases will also be eligible for daily testing, preventing the need for self-isolation. Only if a daily test returns a positive result will the staff member or student need to isolate.

### Is it compulsory?

No. It is an offer to all staff and students but it is not compulsory. Testing will only take place with consent.

### What about my child's data?

Before testing, you will be sent information regarding providing consent. This will also contain a privacy notice specifying what data is required and how it will be handled by the school.

### Who will administer the tests?

The actual test (inserting the swabs) is done by the individual being tested, though we will have trained staff available to offer support on this. These staff, along with those involved in the processing and administration of the testing will be from our existing staffing.

### Will staff be trained?

It is important that the testing is done safely and accurately. All staff involved in the testing programme will have undergone the appropriate government and local authority training.

### **What safety measures will be in place?**

We are working with the local authority and staff in existing test centres to ensure we have clear and effective risk assessments in place and that all appropriate PPE and safety controls are in place. Though we are keen to have the testing in place quickly, it is more important that it is done safely and securely.

### **What if a pupil tests positive?**

Participating staff and pupils who test positive will be informed about their results individually. Where participants are under 16, parents or legal guardians will also be notified. Guidance on safe travel and additional precautions will be provided along with test results.

Pupils 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 will be able to provide these PCR test kits to perform at home or you can go to [www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) or call 119 to book a follow-up test. If ordering a PCR test yourselves, they should choose to visit a drive-through test site if possible, as it is faster than requesting a home test.

During this time while they wait for the PCR result (via text / email) they will need to self-isolate.

If the PCR test returns a positive result, you will have to self-isolate and follow the guidance from NHS Test and Trace.

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

They will be able to stay in school and resume their activities as normal. A pupil will only be told if they test positive on a 'lateral flow' test, so if you do not hear you can assume it was negative. A small number of pupils may need to repeat the test if the first test was invalid or void for some reason.

### **What if a close contact at school/college tests positive?**

A close contact of someone in school/college 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>

### **Other questions?**

If you have any other questions regarding the testing programme, then please email the school at [delasalle@delasalleschool.org.uk](mailto:delasalle@delasalleschool.org.uk)