



HEATHLANDS

Nursery, Primary and Secondary Provision, Day & Residential
BSL Training & Resource Centre



Co-Head Teachers – Mrs L Reeves Costi and Mrs S Shields

4 January 2021

Dear Parent/Carers

NHS Test and Trace: COVID-19 testing for staff and upper school students

We are working to keep our school as safe as possible. You may have heard that testing for those without coronavirus symptoms is beginning across the country using new, quicker COVID-19 tests known as 'lateral flow tests'.

Along with the other protective measures we are taking, these tests will help staff and students to remain in 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 we are encouraging everyone to take it.

We will be testing all staff and secondary school students who want to participate from week commencing 4 January 2021. We enclose an instructional leaflet with some more information.

You will receive a separate email with a Google consent form which can be completed electronically and does not require printing. If you are happy for your child to be tested, please complete the consent form before Thursday 7th January 2021.

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. Staff will oversee the swab process, for students to undertake themselves.

Results (which take around half an hour from testing) will be shared directly with staff and pupils participating. Where participants are under 16, parents or legal guardians will also be informed.

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 we are advised that 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 and registration information will be sent to you via the Google consent form.

What if my child does not want to take part in testing?

Testing is voluntary and if your child is worried about what the testing will entail, they do not have to take part. However, if they are a close contact of a positive test result, they will need to self isolate. We understand it can be scary being tested, but want to encourage all upper school students to participate in order to be as safe as we can.



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What if a student tests positive?

Participating staff and students who test positive will be informed about their results individually. Where participants are under 16, parents or legal guardians will also be notified. Staff and students who test positive will need to return home as soon as possible.

Students 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). School will 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, you should choose to visit a drive-through test site if possible, as it is faster than requesting a home test.

During this time while you wait for the PCR result (via text/email) you 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?

Students will be able to stay in school and resume their activities as normal. A student 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 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 about testing lower school students?

Currently the guidance requires only secondary aged students to be tested. Upper and lower schools are kept in separate bubbles already, however the whole staff team will be tested on a weekly basis and this includes all of the lower school staff as well as admin and site staff too. If a lower school student is unwell, they will need to remain at home and take a PCR test.

What about taxi drivers and escorts?

We are currently awaiting more information as to whether the school will be required to involve them in the testing programme.



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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>.

- Remote learning will continue to be available for all students who are self isolating at home when other students are back to face to face learning.
- We hope this letter has answered many of your questions, however if you have any further queries, please email admin@heathlands.herts.sch.uk

Yours sincerely

Lesley Reeves Costi and Sarah Shields
Co-Head Teachers