

COVID-19 National Testing Programme:



# Asymptomatic testing in education settings from 21 February 22 – what, why and when

This guide is for use by mainstream nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools, further education colleges, ITPS and ACLPs, SEND settings and Alternative Provision settings

**RP209.0 - Created 21 February 2022** This has been developed by the Department for Education and currently applies to **England only**.

*Further guidance will be developed by the devolved governments.*

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# What testing is advised from 21 February 2022 onwards?

We are moving to a different phase in managing the virus, where we learn to live with COVID-19. We now know that the risks of severe illness from COVID-19 in most children and most fully vaccinated adults are very low, and our successful vaccination programme has achieved a high rate of take-up. We are therefore removing this requirement, bringing education into line with wider society. Public health advice is that regular testing in mainstream education and childcare settings is **no longer advised**.

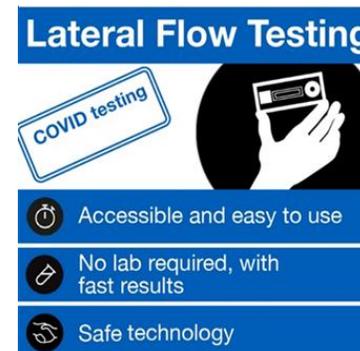
## What regular asymptomatic testing is still advised

Staff and students of secondary age and above in SEND settings, alternative provision settings, and SEND units within mainstream settings, or equivalent in further education colleges, are currently advised to continue twice-weekly testing. This is because of the increased risk for some in these settings of poor clinical outcomes, as well as the higher risk of closures due to high staff/student ratios and the need to employ specialist staff. SEND settings may also deliver therapeutic services on site to their students and so closure of these settings potentially disrupts access to vital health services.

## What other asymptomatic testing may be advised

Nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools and FE colleges may be advised to re-introduce asymptomatic testing for targeted groups of staff and pupils/ students (in Year 7 and above) in the event of an outbreak, and only if testing measures have been advised or agreed by a Director of Public Health or local Health Protection Team.

Asymptomatic testing does not replace current guidance for those with symptoms. Anyone with symptoms, should book [a free NHS test](#) and follow the latest government guidance.



# Who should take part in testing and when should they test?

## Who should take part in regular asymptomatic testing?

- ✓ **Specialist SEND settings, Alternative Provision (AP) settings and SEND Units in mainstream settings / equivalent identifiable SEND cohorts in FE Colleges** - Staff, students and pupils in year 7 and above in these settings should continue to test twice a week, 3-4 days apart. Staff and students within identifiable SEND cohorts in FE colleges should discuss whether regular testing is appropriate with their Local Authority, local Health Protection Team or Director of Public Health.

## Who may be asked to test in the event of an outbreak?

- ✓ **Staff, students and pupils in year 7 and above** - in all education settings (including nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools, FE colleges and ITPs/ACLPs, SEND and AP settings) may be advised by their DPH or local health advisor to resume or undertake additional testing for a short period of time, if the setting is experiencing an outbreak of COVID-19. Outbreaks will most likely be contained within a class, a year group or other defined group (such as a football team).
- ✗ **Primary age children** – should not undertake asymptomatic testing through the educational setting.



The [Contingency Framework](#) sets out the principles for managing local outbreaks of COVID-19 in education and childcare settings. If you think you have a COVID-19 outbreak in your setting, you should review the framework and liaise with your Local Authority, local Health Protection Team or Director of Public Health to identify what measures are most suitable for your setting. If you are advised that asymptomatic testing is the most appropriate measure, you should agree which group within your setting should undertake testing, how frequently and for how long.

# Key principles for testing in the event of an outbreak



If you suspect that your setting might be experiencing an outbreak, further guidance can be found in the [contingency framework](#). You should also contact your local health protection team or Director of Public Health (DPH) for advice and support. Testing is only one of the measures that may be considered depending on the situation in your setting.



Any decision to implement additional testing measures must be agreed with, or recommended by, a Director of Public Health (DPH), your Local Authority, or a local Health Protection Team. They will help your setting to decide who should test, how frequently and for how long.



Testing in the event of an outbreak should be for a short, defined amount of time, and for the minimum number of groups or cohorts required to support management of the outbreak. It is not expected that testing will be re-introduced for whole populations within a setting.



Staff, pupils and students should still [report the results of tests online](#) or by phone, every time a test is taken, even if the result was negative or void.



Onsite ATS Testing should only be considered by settings in an agreed Enhanced Response Area (ERA). You should liaise with a Director of Public Health (DPH), your Local Authority, or a local Health Protection Team if you are in an agreed ERA and want to undertake onsite testing in your setting. For guidance on ATS processes, please refer to the light green how to guide or contact the DfE coronavirus helpline: 0800 046 8687.

# How should you order self-test kits for outbreak testing?

All education settings will continue to be able to order self-test kits for groups of staff, pupils and students, if they are advised to test in the event of an outbreak in the setting.

The [online ordering solution](#) and delivery processes will be changing, to reflect the changes to regular asymptomatic testing. Education settings will be able to place an order and receive a delivery within 3 working days. Detailed guidance on how to order test kits will be published shortly.

The ordering process for SEND and AP settings will not be changing. These settings will be able to continue to order on a weekly basis to enable their staff and pupils/ students to test twice a week. Please refer to the separate ordering How to Guide for SEND and AP settings [SEND and AP settings Platform](#)

- 1** Use up existing supplies of self test kits prior to placing an order - If your setting is asked to undertake testing in the event of an outbreak, you should ask staff, pupils / students to use up any supplies of test kits they have at home first or issue them with a new box of test kits from your existing stock. You should check expiry dates before supplying these test kits.
- 2** Access test kits via the universal testing offer - Staff may prefer to access test kits from their local pharmacy or by ordering on [gov.uk](#), as this may be quicker and easier for them.
- 3** Place an order on the [online ordering solution](#) - If you have run out of stock you will be able to place an order through the online ordering system. You will be asked to enter the total number of staff, pupils/ students in your setting and you will receive a proportionate amount of test kits to cover the outbreak in your setting. Orders placed by 3pm each day will be processed and delivered within 3 working days. You will receive a delivery confirmation email, confirming the expected delivery date of your order.
- 4** Call 119 for further advice and support - If you need additional test kits but you are blocked from placing an order or you need more test kits than you can order through the online ordering system, you should contact NHS Test and Trace (UKHSA) on 119.

**!** You must agree what measures you are taking with your Local Authority, local Health Protection Team or Director of Public Health before placing any orders. Settings should keep a record of discussions with local authority / health contacts, and be ready to provide information about the additional testing measures that have been agreed, if requested.

# Checklist for testing in the event of an outbreak

## Key things to remember:

- ✓ **DO** retain any surplus stock of self test kits or ATS test kits in your setting to enable you to stand up outbreak testing quickly if needed.
- ✓ **DO** keep track of the stock you have in your setting and when the expiry dates are, so you can manage the supply of test kits to your staff, pupils and students.
- ✓ **DO** only place an order through the online ordering system if you need test kits to deliver testing following agreement or a recommendation from your local Health Protection Team, Local Authority or Director of Public Health (DPH) because your setting is in an outbreak.
- ✓ **DO** make sure someone is available to receive the delivery when it is scheduled. If your delivery is scheduled for when your setting is closed please contact 119 for advice and support.
- ✓ **DO** monitor reported levels of covid in your setting and consult your local Health Protection Team, Local Authority or Director of Public Health (DPH) promptly if you think you may need to consider an intervention.
- ✗ **DON'T** supply test kits to staff, students and pupils, as they no longer need to test twice per week. Only hand out test kits if you are undertaking testing as a result of an outbreak in your setting, or if staff and pupils/students are part of a SEND Unit and are regularly testing.
- ✗ **DON'T** implement additional testing measures without consulting your local Health Protection Team, Local Authority or Director of Public Health as you may not be able to order additional test kits unless testing measures have been properly agreed.

# Key Questions about regular asymptomatic testing

## ? Why are we no longer being asked to do regular, twice weekly testing?

Covid-19 presents a low risk of serious illness to most children and most of those who are fully vaccinated. Due to high immunity in society and a greater understanding of the virus, we can now transition to a new phase: living with COVID-19, and public health advice is that regular testing in mainstream education and childcare settings is no longer needed.

## ? I am in a specialist SEND or AP setting and need to order more test kits to continue regular testing, how do I do this?

If you need additional test kits to enable staff and pupils / students (in year 7 and above) to continue regular, twice weekly testing in your SEND or Alternative Provision setting, you should place an order through the online ordering system. Orders placed by 3pm on a Tuesday will be delivered during the following week. You can order test kits through the online ordering system 10 calendar days after receiving a delivery confirmation email, which confirms the scheduled delivery date of your forthcoming order. You should only order the test kits you need. When placing your order, you should input how many staff and pupils /students need test kits and you will be provided with 1 box of 7 test kits to enable them to test twice per week for 3.5 weeks.

The process for mainstream settings who need to order test kits for their SEND unit is different. Please refer to the relevant guidance for SEND and AP settings [SEND and AP settings](#)

## ? I have a specialist SEND unit in my setting – is the testing recommendation for pupils / students and staff in this unit different to the rest of my mainstream setting?

Yes – if you are mainstream educational setting with a specialist SEND unit, the pupils / students in year 7 and above, and staff within the unit should continue to be advised to test regularly, twice per week and you should supply them with test kits to enable them to do this. This is because these pupils / students are more likely to be vulnerable and at higher risk of poor clinical outcomes as a result of Covid-19. Specialist SEND settings are also advised to continue regular testing – further guidance can be found on the document sharing platform for [SEND and AP settings](#). If you think you are experiencing an outbreak in your SEND unit, you should refer to the [contingency framework](#) and contact your local health advisor, as you may need to agree additional measures for this group.

# Key Questions about outbreak testing



## **Is testing compulsory?**

Testing is voluntary and individuals should be allowed to attend school or college even if they decide not to take part in testing. However, we would like to encourage everyone to join in testing in the event of an outbreak to help break transmission links by identifying those that may be carrying the virus unknowingly.



## **If a pupil, student or staff member has COVID-19 symptoms, should they get a PCR test?**

Yes. Anyone with symptoms should take a PCR test, stay at home and follow government guidance if positive. People who have tested positive will continue to be advised to stay at home for five full days and then receive two negative test results on consecutive days before returning to their workplace or setting.



## **Can my setting decide whether to implement testing if we suspect that we are experiencing an outbreak?**

If you suspect you are experiencing an outbreak in your setting, you should first contact your local Health Protection Team, Local Authority, or Director of Public Health for advice and support. Together with the appropriate local health advisor you should decide which measures are most appropriate for your setting. If you are advised to implement testing as an outbreak management tool, you should agree the frequency and duration of your testing regime with your local advisor (DPH, Health Protection Team, LA) before supplying or ordering additional test kits.



## **Should we supply staff and pupils/students (in year 7 and above) who have tested positive with test kits to enable them to test on days 5 and 6 and return to the setting if they are negative?**

Staff and pupils/ students should use any test kits they already have at home to undertake testing on days 5 and 6. If they have run out, they should order additional test kits online via gov.uk or you can supply them with a box of 7 self-test kits if you have an appropriate route to do so, such as through a sibling or parent / guardian or in the post.

# Important Contacts

Schools and colleges in England can raise questions, concerns or report issues, with the exception of those related to the supply, ordering and delivery of test kits, via **the DfE coronavirus helpline: 0800 046 8687**. **Opening hours** Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm, Saturday and Sunday from 10am to 6pm.

If you have any queries or are experiencing any issues with the **supply, ordering or delivery of test kits**, please contact **NHS T&T (UKHSA)** on **119** for further support and advice (opening times: 7am – 11pm each day).

**Anyone with one or more symptoms of coronavirus** - a high temperature, a new continuous cough; or a loss or change in sense of smell or taste - should self-isolate and [book a test](#) or call 119 in England and Wales, or 0300 303 2713 in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

**If you have an urgent media query** or you or your school or college is approached by a member of the media, please [contact the Department of Health and Social Care press office](#) in the first instance.

**You can find the latest guidance on the** [Testing in Education Settings](#) on the Document Sharing Platform.

# Where to find more information

Latest information on Rapid Testing is available at:

[Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

You can find the latest guidance on the [Testing in Education Settings](#) document sharing platform

This page will be regularly updated to include:

- FAQs
- How to order more test kits
- Up to date government guidelines
- More detailed information about the testing process
- The digital process for managing registration and linking to the national Test & Trace process
- Contact information for DfE and DHSC support teams for additional resources and documents



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