COVID-19 PCR Surge Testing in Secondary Schools

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are you surge testing in school?

Introducing surge testing is a public health decision based on a range of factors including the presence of a particular variant in an area, the likelihood of onward transmission, and which age-groups in particular are getting infected.

In Cumbria:

- Rates have been rising exponentially over the last 2 weeks.
- Vaccination coverage is not complete.
- There are increasingly young people more vulnerable.
- There is a possibility of NHS capacity becoming overwhelmed in a peak situation in July/August if no mitigations in place.

By testing secondary school children now (aged 12 and over), we can hopefully identify individuals who need to be isolating and stop further increases in cases, which could lead to more vulnerable people being infected and becoming very ill.

Does my child have to have a PCR test?

No, it is up to you in discussion with your child to decide whether or not they have a test. We strongly advise your child to be tested, however if you do not want them to be tested, there is no need to return the consent form. Testing is available for all students aged 12 or over. If your child is 11 years old and has symptoms, please follow out usual guidance of contacting school.

My child has already tested positive for COVID-19 through a PCR test during the past 90 days – do they need another test?

No, they should only get a PCR test during the 90-day period if they develop new symptoms of COVID-19.

I thought PCR tests were for people with COVID-19 symptoms? Why is Public Health asking people without symptoms to get a PCR test?

People with symptoms of COVID-19 are always advised to get a PCR test. Sometimes Public Health will recommend people without symptoms get a PCR test when they see a very rapid rise in the number of people testing positive for COVID-19. This is because PCR tests are very sensitive and can detect COVID-19 in people who don't realise they have it (because they don't have symptoms, have different illness symptoms or are not showing symptoms yet).

A positive PCR test can also be processed in a laboratory to see which variant of COVID-19 has been detected. This is important when there are concerns about the

variant circulating in a community (especially if it is very easy to pass on to other people – like the Delta variant that we are now seeing in Cumbria).

How will the test be carried out?

Your child will be asked to take a swab of their own tonsils (or area where the tonsils would have been) and nose. The process for taking the sample is the same as when completing a Lateral Flow Test (LFT), which many secondary school children have already been doing at home. Because children now know what to expect, they may be asked to test in groups to minimise disruption to lessons. As the sample is sent off, they will also need to self-register on the NHS website using the information you have provided on the consent form.

Does my child need to isolate whilst waiting for the test result?

No, they do not need to isolate whilst waiting for the test result.

My child is in Year 11 or Year 13 and is no longer coming into school. What should they do?

They are still encouraged to get a PCR test, but do not need to come into school in order to get one. They can access a test by attending a local testing site between 8am and 8pm. They do not need to book in advance and can give their own consent as long as they are aged 16+.

Any year 11 students who are not yet 16 will need to be accompanied by an adult.

If students cannot attend a local testing site, they can order a test kit to be sent to the house. Again, if your child is under the age of 15, you will need to order the kit on their behalf.

If you do not have internet access, you can call 119 to order a kit. Please make the operator aware your child has been asked to test as part of local surge testing arrangements when making the call.

My child is aged 16+ and in Year 12 – will they be tested at school?

Students in year 12 will be tested at school.

They can also access a test by attending a local testing site between 8am and 8pm. They do not need to book in advance and can give their own consent as long as they are aged 16+.

If students cannot attend a local testing site, they can order a test kit to be sent to the house. If they do not have internet access, year 12 students can call 119 to order a kit. They should make the operator aware they have been asked to test as part of local surge testing arrangements when making the call.

How will I be informed of the result of the test?

When you give consent for your child to be tested, you will provide a mobile phone number. The test result will be texted to you via the contact number you provide.

Your school will also receive the test result via secure email.

What if the test result is positive?

Your child and other members of their household will need to isolate (stay at home) for 10 full days from the date of the positive test result. We will also provide you with further information to support you during the stay at home period.

What if the test result is negative?

You do not need to do anything else. Continue to follow COVID-safe advice such as 'Hands, Face, Space and Fresh Air'. We also recommend anyone in your household aged 12+ continue to test at home twice a week with 'self-test' kits (also known as Lateral Flow Devices/Tests).

What if the test result in inconclusive?

Your child will need to get another PCR test and should do this by being taken to a local test site. You can also order a home test kit. Call 119 if you do not have internet access. Your child will not need to isolate whilst waiting for the result.

How will my child's data be used?

Please read the privacy notice that will be sent out at the same time as this sheet.

I have other questions – who should I contact?

Please contact the school at office@workingtonacademy.org