

Dear Parent/Carer,

Important message for Parents/Carers

It has been great to see so many children and young people returning to school and the work that has been conducted in our schools to ensure a safe return. It is inevitable that for some children and young people they will feel unwell and for many this could include COVID-19 related symptoms.

This message contains important information about how you can get a test. You cannot get a test by arriving at the Testing Centre without an appointment and you should not go to the hospital (Emergency Department) or your GP for a test.

Evidence to date has shown that children usually have much milder symptoms and they have tended to pick up the infection from home rather than from school. However, it remains extremely important that any child with symptoms of COVID-19 stays away from school, to avoid the risk of spreading infection to others, including the more vulnerable. These symptoms are:

- high temperature – feeling hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- new, continuous cough – coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different from normal

Over the last week, we have seen a number of children being referred for a COVID-19 test in accordance with national guidance. If your child has been in close contact with a confirmed case, they will be asked to self-isolate at home. Please DO NOT try to get your child tested unless they have developed the symptoms of COVID-19. A negative test result of someone who has not displayed symptoms does not mean that they can go back to school; it simply means that they had not fully developed the illness at the time of the test, and they could develop the illness at any point in the 14 days.

We are very aware that in the South West, as elsewhere, there have been delays in accessing tests. This is a national issue as laboratory capacity for analysing tests is being directed to areas in the country with the highest numbers of COVID-19 cases. We are doing all we can to work with local and national agencies to increase the capacity available.

We understand how frustrating this can be, particularly with children returning to school and being asked to stay off school until they can get a COVID-19 test. However, it is crucial that we keep our schools open, and continue to keep our children and communities safe.

We therefore ask that you continue to follow government guidance and keep your child at home and book a test as soon as you are able for anyone who has symptoms. You only need to get a test if your child has the symptoms listed above. If your child has these symptoms, it is really important that you do not send them to school. Tests are most effective if done in the first 5 days of having symptoms.

The current routes for getting a test are:

- Parents book a test online at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/coronavirus-in-children/> or by calling 119

Plymouth Schools Only

- If parents or carers are unable to book a local slot, they can email d-ccg.cornwalldevon.urgenttesting@nhs.net explaining that the test is for a child attending a Plymouth school and they will be supported to access local testing.

If you cannot book a test immediately, we ask that you try again as the system is currently very busy and your patience is appreciated.

If you are not able to secure a test, it is important that your child remains away from school for the 10 day isolation period if they themselves have symptoms, or 14 days if they live in a household with someone else who is displaying symptoms. As part of creating a COVID-19 safe school, children must not return before the isolation period is over. Please work with your school to keep all children and young people safe.

If you book a test online, please ensure that you enter the child's name where requested. Please check carefully as this is important for the test result certificate.

You can also use the NHS 111 online service if:

- you're worried about your COVID-19 symptoms
- you're not sure what to do

Call 111 if you cannot get help online.

More advice on what to do can be found here. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>



c/o UTC Plymouth
Park Avenue
Plymouth
PL1 4RL

Website: www.reachsouth.org

We would like to reassure you that we are working hard with local agencies to put additional local arrangements in place to boost the local testing availability until national testing capacity can be increased and we will update you as soon as the situation changes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Ashton".

Dean Ashton
Chief Executive Officer



Test and Trace

23 September 2020

Dear parents and guardians,

This is an important letter to share some information on how we can work together to make sure we can continue to give children and young people the best education in the safest way possible.

One important part of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of pupils, parents and our communities is testing for coronavirus. We all have a duty to make sure that the right people have access to get tested at the right time. Every time a test is used inappropriately, a person with Covid-19 symptoms may miss out on getting tested.

Therefore, I ask that you all follow these principles:

- You should only book a test if your child has any of these three coronavirus symptoms:
 1. **a high temperature:** any new high temperature where your child feels hot to touch on their chest or back (you do not need to measure the temperature)
 2. **a new continuous cough:** coughing a lot for more than an hour, or three or more coughing episodes in 24 hours
 3. **a loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste:** a noticeable loss of smell or taste or things smell and taste different to normal
- Your child **does not need a test** if they have a runny nose, are sneezing or feeling unwell but do not have a temperature, cough or loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste because these are not normally symptoms of coronavirus.
- If you are unsure about whether to get a test, please check the official list of symptoms on the NHS website, which is reviewed regularly:
www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/
- Only the person with symptoms should get a test. You do not need to get a test for anyone else in the household unless they also have any of the three symptoms listed above. All members of the household need to self-isolate whilst waiting for the test result.

- If the person with symptoms' test comes back positive, other members of their household should continue self-isolating for 14 days and **only get a test if they develop coronavirus symptoms.**
- If a pupil in a class or bubble tests positive for coronavirus, anyone who is advised to self-isolate **does not require a test unless they subsequently develop symptoms.**

No one else in the same class or bubble as the symptomatic person needs to take any action unless advised by the school. Schools have detailed guidance and access to a Department for Education and Public Health England helpline for advice and support.

Contacts of a person who has tested positive must follow the guidance carefully and in full, which means they must stay at home for 14 days. This is because it can take several days following contact with an infected person before an individual develops symptoms or the virus can be detected. Students should only book a test if they get symptoms.

The NHS has produced some guidance to help parents understand when their child can and cannot attend school which you may find useful: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

It is vital for children's learning and future opportunities that they are able to return to school and college. It is therefore vitally important that all we work together and do our bit to make this possible.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Viv Bennett CBE

Chief Nurse and Director Maternity and Early Years | Public Health England

Head of World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre for Public Health Nursing and Midwifery

Follow me on Twitter: @VivJBennett



Dr Susan Hopkins

Interim Chief Medical Officer | NHS Test & Trace

Deputy Director | Public Health England

Consultant in Infectious Diseases & Microbiology
Royal Free, London

COVID-19 Absence Guidance

Applicable to pupils and staff

WHAT TO DO IF...	ACTION NEEDED	BACK TO SCHOOL WHEN...
... my child has COVID 19 (Coronavirus) symptoms*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child should not attend school • Inform school immediately • Child should get a test • Whole household self-isolates 	... when the child's test comes back as negative or after a minimum of 10 days of self-isolation
...my child tests positive for COVID-19 (Coronavirus)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child should not attend school • Child self-isolates for 10 days from when symptoms* started (or from day of test if no symptoms*) • Inform school immediately of the test result • Whole household self-isolates for 14 days from day when symptoms* started (or from day of test if no symptoms*) - even if someone tests negative during those 14 days 	<p>... after 10 days of self-isolation and has been without a temperature for at least 48 hours.</p> <p>The child may still have a cough or loss / change in sense of taste and smell. These symptoms can last for several weeks after the infection has gone</p>
... somebody in the household has COVID-19 (Coronavirus) symptoms*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child should not attend school • Household member with symptoms should get a test • Whole household self-isolates while waiting for test result • Inform school immediately about the test result 	... when household member test is negative, and child does not have COVID-19 (Coronavirus) symptoms*
... somebody in my household has tested positive for COVID-19 (Coronavirus)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child should not attend school • Whole household self-isolates for 14 days from day when symptoms* started (or from day of test if no symptoms) - even if someone tests negative during those 14 days 	... when child has completed 14 days of self-isolation, even if they test negative during the 14 days

*** Symptoms of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) include at least 1 of a high temperature; a new continuous cough; a loss or change to the sense of taste or smell.**

COVID-19 Absence Guidance

Applicable to pupils and staff

<p>...NHS Test and Trace has identified my child as a 'close contact' of somebody with symptoms* or confirmed COVID-19 (Coronavirus)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child should not attend school • Child self-isolates for 14 days (as advised by NHS Test and Trace) – even if they test negative during those 14 days • The rest of the household does not need to self-isolate, unless they are a 'close contact' as well to the infected person 	<p>...when the child has completed 14 days of self-isolation, even if they test negative during those 14 days</p>
<p>...we / my child has travelled and has to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not take unauthorised leave from school in term time • Consider quarantine requirements and FCO advice when booking travel to ensure time in school is not lost • Provide information to school as per attendance policy <p>Returning from a destination where quarantine is needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child should not attend school • Whole household self-isolates for 14 days – even if they test negative during those 14 days 	<p>...when the quarantine period of 14 days has been completed for the child, even if they test negative during those 14 days</p>
<p>...we have received advice from a medical / official source that my child must resume shielding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the school to discuss options for safe learning 	<p>When advised by the school in consultation with other agencies as appropriate</p>
<p>....I am not sure who should get a test for COVID -19 (Coronavirus)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only people with symptoms* need to get a test • People without symptoms are not advised to get a test, even if they are a 'close contact' of someone who tests positive 	<p>...when conditions above, as matching your situation, are met</p>

*** Symptoms of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) include at least 1 of a high temperature; a new continuous cough; a loss or change to the sense of taste or smell.**

COVID-19 Absence Guidance

Applicable to pupils and staff

A new continuous cough means:

- You are coughing a lot for more than 1 hour



OR

- You have been coughing a lot 3 or more times in 24 hours



- If you normally have a cough, it may be worse than usual



*** Symptoms of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) include at least 1 of a high temperature; a new continuous cough; a loss or change to the sense of taste or smell.**