

2 January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

Please find below a statement issued on behalf of all York secondary schools and the Public Health and Education teams at City of York Council, which outlines the approach that will be taken to testing secondary school students and staff in York.

Plans for Lateral Flow Testing (LFT) testing in secondary schools

Following the announcement on 30th December delaying the full opening of secondary schools, the City of York Council's public health and education teams are working with the York Schools and Academies Board to develop plans to offer LFT for staff and pupils to support the phased return to school from 11th January 2021. Whilst testing remains optional the Department for Education has made it clear that there is an expectation that all secondary schools should promote and encourage LFT.

In York the plan being developed to support secondary schools, their staff and pupils, will involve the offer of testing from two dedicated school testing sites at the University of York and York St John University. The York St John site will be open only for children in exam year groups (Year 11 and Year 13) from 4th – 7th January 2021. This will support their return to school from 11th January. Both testing sites will be open for all secondary aged children from Friday 8th January to support the full return to school from 18th January 2021.

Parents/carers can book a time for a test using the following link:

<https://www.york.gov.uk/SymptomFreeCOVIDTest>

Bookings can be made for the York St John site using this link from 2nd January, bookings will open for the University of York site from 8th January 2021.

Children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a parent or carer when they visit the University testing sites. Children will be required to attend the testing centre twice in a period of 3-5 days prior to their return to school and the results of the tests will be shared with the child's school.

If a child tests positive they will be required to take a PCR test and to self-isolate until the result of the test is known. If the PCR test is negative the child will be able to attend school from 11th or 18th January dependent upon the return date for their year group.

If a child has tested positive in the 90 days prior to 4th January then it is not necessary for them to have a test if they have completed their isolation period and they should not be booked in for a test if they have not completed their 10 day isolation period.

During week beginning 4th January on site contact testing areas will be set up at each secondary school. From week beginning 11th January these testing areas will provide capacity to test children daily for a period of 7 days if they are confirmed contacts of a child who has had a positive Covid test. This should help to reduce the need for whole bubbles to self-isolate so preventing further disruption to the children's education. School staff will also be provided with testing kits by their school to allow them to take a twice weekly test. The tests are optional and require consent to be obtained before being administered. Schools will provide a copy of the Covid 19 testing privacy statement which provides details about how personal data will be used, stored and when it and how it will be disposed of. The personal data collected from school staff, students, parents and carers will only be used for the purposes of testing and consent can be withdrawn at any time.

The tests for children will be supervised by public health trained staff. Members of school staffs will be asked to use self-administered tests. If a child or member of staff has a positive result from a lateral flow test they will be asked to take a PCR test to confirm the positive result. Children/staff testing positive will then be required to self-isolate for 10 days. The school will contact the parents/carers of close contacts and will offer them the opportunity to have a daily test in school or to self-isolate if they do not want to be tested.

The co-ordinated city approach to testing will ensure that schools are supported to make testing available to all staff and pupils from 4th January 2021. The use of the two central testing sites will allow all secondary age children who want to have a test to have been tested prior to their return to school. It also means that the tests will be administered to appropriate clinical standards, overseen by the City of York public health team.

The introduction of lateral flow testing in schools is an additional layer of preventative response to Covid19, but it is important to continue to maintain the other control measures that schools have had in place since March 2020. In York, schools have been very successful in implementing their prevention response and, as a result, school attendance has remained consistently above national averages throughout the pandemic. It is essential that schools continue to implement these measures and to see LFT as an additional tool in the armoury in controlling the spread of the disease.

HANDS, FACE, SPACE remain the essential elements to effective infection control.