

18 December 2020

Dear Parents

Rapid Covid-19 Testing

I write to update you on current guidelines moving forward into the New Year around Covid-19 and the latest government announcement with regards to the provision to test students and staff in secondary education.

This week the government announced that, from January, teachers and pupils will have access to rapid testing to help schools and colleges stay open throughout the spring term. The government are still finalising details of how testing will be administered within schools, however I felt it was important to contact you now to ask for your support with this moving forward. Basic information received from the government would suggest the following:

- Teachers and other staff will be able to have routine testing once a week; students and staff will be able to do 'serial testing' if one of their close contacts test positive. This supports rapid asymptomatic testing of staff and students in schools and colleges.
- This is a phased approach, starting with secondary age settings (students in schools and colleges in Year 7 and older), with plans to extend to primary schools thereafter.
- Students and staff will be able to do 'serial testing' if they are a close contact of a positive case in school or college. This will allow them to stay in education by taking a daily test in the morning for 7 school days. If at any point they test positive they will need to leave school, take a further PCR test and follow the isolation guidelines.

We will, as ever, wait to see exactly what is proposed and how it will be rolled out across the country before we enact any plans. We have no testing equipment in school at the time of writing, but we need to be prepared to run the tests when they do arrive, as the onus seems to be on us to be ready. I will be waiting for the final guidance and developing a plan for consultation over the Christmas holidays, however, one aspect that is clear is that we will require permission from families to administer any tests within school. That is something we can commence now in preparation for the deployment of tests as and when they do arrive.

Participation is voluntary for the programme and active consent is required. I would ask that you complete the attached pro-forma confirming if you give permission for your child/children to be tested in the event of close contact with an individual who has tested positive for Covid 19. People who wish to decline to participate in serial testing will follow the usual national guidelines and are obliged to self-isolate according to the advice given to them by the NHS Test & Trace service. Further details can be found on the government website, however I have attached a two page document with information for parents.

Please can all consent forms be returned either by post or electronically **as soon as possible** in order to allow us, as a school, to be prepared for whatever government guidance states once it is released to support our attempt to be operational and support your child/children as normally as possible. I would request that all responses need to be with the school by no later than **Friday 8 January 2021**.



All data generated as a result of testing will be confidential and will only be retained by the school for 14 days and not shared as per our GDPR Policy and in accordance with government guidelines; a full privacy policy for testing will be made available on our website when we receive this from the government. Due to confidentiality restrictions, we will not identify any individuals throughout and insist that this is respected, in the way you would want if it was your family that was affected.

Thank you again for your continued support in these difficult times and can I take this opportunity to wish you and your families a safe and enjoyable Christmas. As ever I will be monitoring my emails, and should you wish to discuss this further I will be available from 4 January.

With best wishes



Mr G Thompson
Headteacher

LATERAL FLOW TESTING CONSENT FORM
QUEEN ELIZABETH'S GRAMMAR, ALFORD

Name of Student:

Form:

I **do/do not give** consent for my child to be tested by a trained member of staff at school in the event of my child/children being in close contact with a confirmed positive Covid-19 case. *(Delete as appropriate)*

I understand that if I decline to have my child/children tested using the lateral flow testing procedure we will be obliged to self-isolate according to the advice given by NHS track and trace.

Signed: (Parent)

Print Name:

