

11th January 2021

Dear Parent

Consent for COVID-19 testing for students attending school during lockdown

As you know we are working hard to keep RGS as safe as possible. As we have mentioned in previous letters, the Government is introducing mass testing for those without coronavirus symptoms using new, quicker COVID-19 tests known as 'lateral flow tests'. Even though we are in a new lockdown, we are keen to roll out these tests to all Senior School students and staff who are still attending school.

Along with the other protective measures we are taking, these tests will help staff and students to remain in school safely. Up to one third of people who have coronavirus experience no symptoms. The test is voluntary, but I would encourage everyone still accessing the building to take it.

We will be offering testing to only the staff and students currently attending school from the week commencing the 11th of January 2021, if they would like to take part. It is recommended that all participating staff and students take part in a second test, three to five days later, which will also be administered in school. After this only staff will take part in in regular ongoing testing.

To give consent for this testing to take place, please fill in the form [here](#). Please note that for students under the age of 16, parents need to provide consent, students aged 16 and over and all staff give their own consent. Our privacy statement relating to testing is [here](#).

Those taking the test will be supervised by trained staff. The 'lateral flow' tests are quick and easy using a swab of your nose and throat. Staff will oversee the swab process, however here is an [instructional leaflet](#) which explains how the test is carried out. Results take around half an hour from testing.

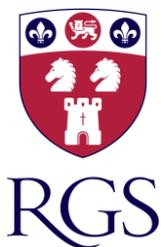
The Government have advised that in validation studies conducted by Oxford University and Public Health England, these tests were shown to be as accurate in identifying a case as a PCR test (99.68% specificity). The tests have lower sensitivity, but they are better at picking up cases when a person has higher viral load, hence the need to test frequently.

What if a participant tests positive?

As part of the process of registration, test participants can opt to have results sent to them directly by mobile phone or email. Participating staff and students who test positive will be informed about their results individually. Where participants are under 16, parents or legal guardians will also be notified using the contact details provided on the consent form. Guidance on safe travel and additional precautions will be provided along with test results.

Anyone who tests positive will need to take a further 'PCR test' (similar to those done in local and regional testing sites) on the same day (or as soon as possible). RGS has a supply of PCR test kits to perform at home or you can go to www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or call 119 to book a follow-up test.

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While a participant waits for the PCR result (via text / email) they will need to self-isolate. If the PCR test returns a positive result you will have to self-isolate and follow the guidance from NHS Test and Trace.

What happens if the test is negative?

Students and staff testing negative will be able to stay in school. School will only contact a student if they test positive on a 'lateral flow test', so if they do not hear you can assume it was negative. A small number of participants may need to repeat the test if the first test was invalid or void for some reason.

What if in future a close contact at school tests positive?

A close contact of someone in school who has tested positive for COVID-19 will be able to return to school if they agree to be tested once a day for 7 days and the tests are negative. If they do not want to take the test, they will need to self-isolate as per the national guidelines. This does not apply to household members or close contacts outside of RGS who will still need to self-isolate. Further details will be provided at the time, but if you would prefer to self-isolate instead of doing daily testing, you can.

Can I come into school specially to have a 'lateral flow test'?

Sorry, no. At this point in time this test is only available to those staff and students who have to work on site during the lockdown; it is vitally important that we all stay at home where we can. We do however expect to expand this testing programme once the lockdown is over and further details on this will follow later in the term.

This testing programme at RGS is for people with no symptoms. If anyone develops symptoms at any time (such as a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste) they must immediately self-isolate, and book a test by calling 119 (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) or 0300 303 2713 (Scotland) or visiting <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>.

This clearly remains a really tough time for the everyone, but hopefully we are now starting to progress towards a return to some form of normality. Hopefully introduction of this 'lateral flow testing' for all those that feel able to take part will support that process and we would encourage all those currently working on site to carefully consider getting involved. As usual, please do get in touch via communications@rgs.newcastle.sch.uk if you have any questions.

Yours faithfully

Tom Keenan
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