

14th January 2021

Dear parents and carers,

Re: latest updates

I hope that this last week of remote learning for your children has been successful and the large amount of work that has been undertaken by staff during the Autumn term has put us in a strong position for such times.

Our first principle will be to continue to deliver live-lessons to all year groups, however when this is not possible due to staff illness or childcare issues for staff it will be a more blended approach via Microsoft Teams.

A reminder when a student has difficulty accessing teams and live lessons they should:

- Contact ict@phoenix.sandwell.sch.uk and explain the details of their access problem.
- Email the class teacher to explain the access issue.
- Self-support videos are available on the school's website under the *Home Learning* tab, click on the *Microsoft Teams* icon.

COVID-19 Rapid flow testing for all staff and students

We continue working to keep our school as safe as possible. You may have heard that testing for those without coronavirus symptoms is beginning across the country using new, quicker COVID-19 tests known as 'lateral flow tests'. As a school we will soon begin to use these tests with our Critical worker and vulnerable children who are currently at school as well as our staff who are on site. This will be rolled out for all students when we are able to bring all of them back after this national lockdown.

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. By testing we will help to stop the virus spread and keep our school open as safely as possible. The test is voluntary, but I would encourage everyone to take it as this will help ensure that large numbers of students are not having to isolate but more importantly it will help reduce the risk of transmission, keeping all our community safer.

I enclose an instructional leaflet with some more information and our school's Covid testing privacy statement is available on our school's website for further information.

I encourage all parents/carers to consent for your child to be tested, **please fill in the consent form by Tuesday 19th January, by clicking on the link sent with this letter (one per student)** – note that the form needs to be completed before Wednesday 20th January to enable the school to process this information for all of our students in readiness for their testing (testing dates and timings of all the 'lateral' flow testing will be provided in due course).

Those taking the test will be supervised by trained staff. The 'lateral flow' tests are quick and easy using a swab of their nose and throat. For under 18s, staff can oversee the swab process.

Results (which take around half an hour from testing) will be shared directly with staff and students participating if they test positive.

We know these tests work - in validation studies conducted by Oxford University and Public Health England, they 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.

Testing will be offered free of charge.

What if a student tests positive?

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. Guidance on safe travel and additional precautions will be provided along with test results.

Students 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). Phoenix will be able to provide these 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. If ordering a PCR test yourselves, students should choose to visit a drive-through test site if possible, as it is faster than requesting a home test.

During this time while they wait for the PCR result (via text / email) students will need to self-isolate. If the PCR test returns a positive result students will have to self-isolate and follow the guidance from NHS Test and Trace.

What happens if the test is negative?

Students will be able to stay in school and resume their activities as normal. A student will only be told if they test positive on a 'lateral flow' test, so if you do not hear from us, you can assume it was negative. A small number of students may need to repeat the test if the first test was invalid or void for some reason.

What if a close contact at school tests positive?

A close contact of someone in school 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 test is 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 school who will still need to self-isolate. Further details will be provided at the time, but if you would prefer for your child to self-isolate instead of doing daily testing, they can.

What if my child develops symptoms?

This testing programme at school is for people with no symptoms.

If your child 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 or visiting <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>.

We will support our staff and students throughout, but please contact us if you need further information.

As I am sure you can imagine organising the testing of almost 2500 students and staff is a significant logistical problem we are now dealing with whilst the school is closed to most of our students. We would therefore welcome any offer of support from members of our local community so if you are keen to get involved as a volunteer, please contact us at info@phoenix.sandwell.sch.uk

Yours faithfully,



Mike Smith
Head teacher