



Public Health
England



North West London
Health Protection Team
61 Colindale Avenue
London
NW9 5EQ
T +44 (0)20 3326 1658
F +44 (0)20 3326 1654
www.gov.uk/phe

21st May 2021

Dear parents and carers,

Re: Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The school has been informed by Public Health England (PHE) and Hillingdon Council that a variant of concern has been identified in the area.

As a precautionary measure, PHE and Hillingdon Council would like to identify if there has been any asymptomatic transmission of COVID-19 by asking all students and staff to take a COVID-19 PCR test on Tuesday 25th, Wednesday 26th and Thursday 27th May 2021.

I understand you might be concerned about this, but there has been a small number of cases of this variant identified across the UK. So, whilst not uncommon, it's very important for everyone in the school to take part in the voluntary testing to stop any onward spread.

These PCR tests are different to the normal lateral flow tests more commonly used as part of the routine asymptomatic testing in school. By using PCR testing, positive results can be sent for genomic sequencing at specialist laboratories, helping us to identify variant of concern cases and their spread. Students and staff should continue using twice-weekly rapid testing as normal.

Please complete the online consent form by **12pm on Monday 24th May**. The link to the form is <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=T6a4Qoa2K0uNTbNDGb5rC5-g2GM89uBLjq7uju0RZCZUNEtMSEezVkrKRvVaTzNUM1VVRzk2MkVJQy4u>

Year 11 and 13 students who have parental consent will be tested on a day when they are on site for assessments.

What happens on the day

Your child will be provided with one set of PCR swab kit to take at the school with the support from trained local authority staff on site.

Guidance on swabbing:

For children - <https://youtu.be/Xaw8DsF2lgc>

For this testing you/your child can continue normal activities, and no one is being asked to self-isolate unless any of the test results are positive.

If you, your child or anyone in your household does develop any symptoms of COVID-19, please treat this as a new possible infection and follow the usual NHS and government guidance on self-isolation and get tested.

Results of these tests will be communicated to you by within 24-48 hours via the contact details provided.

Please be assured we are following the national guidance about reducing the spread of infection and will continue to work closely with Hillingdon Council and PHE as required.

Thank you for your support with this.

Yours sincerely

Dr Gunveer Plahe
Consultant in Health Protection
North West London Health Protection Team, PHE

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a PCR test and how is it performed?

- This is self-test. A sample is collected by inserting a long swab into the back of your throat and nose. A member of the testing team will be on site to offer advice on how to do the test and answer any questions.

Why aren't you using community test sites/lateral flow "rapid" tests?

- Genomic sequencing, which tells us whether a positive case is a variant or not, can only be conducted using a PCR test. We will also be deploying a new technology - known as 'genotype assay testing' – to rapidly detect new COVID mutations indicating whether positive test samples contain known variants. Genotype assay testing is compatible only with PCR tests.

What does it mean if I get a positive test result?

- A positive test means that you have COVID-19. Therefore, you will need to isolate and follow the [stay at home guidance](#) and follow the school protocols

What does it mean if I get a negative result?

- A negative test result means that the virus that causes COVID-19 was not found in your sample. You can carry on as normal and do not need to isolate unless you develop symptoms.