

Wednesday, 24 November 2021

Testing changes for school direct contacts

All children, young people and education staff, identified as a direct contact for COVID-19 from a positive case in a nursery, school or college, will no longer be required to take a PCR test from Thursday, 25 November.

Instead, any student, aged 3 to 18 years old, alongside all educational staff, who are a direct contact from a positive case in an education or nursery setting, will be asked to use Lateral Flow Tests (LFTs), at home, daily for 10 days.

These new measures, announced today by Ministers, aim to help ease the rising COVID pressures caused by multiple direct contact PCR tests for children and adults in nurseries, schools and colleges and reduce the disruption to teaching and students' learning.

The decision to change the policy in nurseries, schools and colleges has been made by Competent Authority Ministers, following advice of Public Health, in consultation with the Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell (STAC).

To ensure the new testing requirement is proportionate and not intrusive for younger age groups, children under 3 years-old, in nursery settings, will only be asked to take 5 Lateral Flow Tests over a 10-day period. All direct contacts from nursery, school and college positive cases will be required to take an LFT every day for 10 days.

All students and staff can continue to attend nursery, school or college as long as their daily LFT test is negative. All test results, regardless of whether they are positive or negative, should be submitted onto the [online LFT portal](#) for 10 days. Confirmatory PCR tests will remain in place for any student or staff member who tests positive on an LFT test.

Any student or staff member showing COVID-19 symptoms should stay home, [book a PCR test](#), and not attend school or college until they receive a negative PCR test result.

The testing policy remains unchanged for any staff member or student who is identified as a direct contact outside of the school or nursery setting, such as a direct contact within a household or anywhere outside of a school environment, and they will be required to attend for a PCR test.

Children and Education Minister, Deputy Scott Wickenden, said: "Ministers fully appreciate and value the hard work and dedication across the early years, school and college community during these difficult times and are fully aware of the challenges that all our staff have faced and continue to face.

"These new measures are vital due to the high number of COVID-19 cases in schools, colleges and nurseries and the disruption being caused to students and staff who are direct contacts. We saw the impact school closures had on children and young people's mental health, which is why we must do all we can to keep education settings and nurseries open and support them during another critically challenging period."

Minister for Health and Social Services, Deputy Richard Renouf, said: "Our COVID Winter Strategy sees a focus on Islanders taking personal responsibility for keeping the community safe and managing their own risk-based decisions. It also sees our testing strategy shift to increased use of LFT tests within the home testing programme. This sentiment is extended to the new LFT offering for students and staff members who are identified as direct contacts in an education environment.

"We are asking that students, parents and staff members make the right decision to participate in the 10-day testing programme and report your results each day. With the removal of the requirement for a PCR test, it is vital all direct contacts participate honestly in the LFT programme. Only by doing so we will protect our children, young people and valued education staff members who are working hard to keep our children and young people in school and nursery.

"Please remember if you have a current PCR test booked as a result of being a direct contact within a school setting, you are asked to cancel that appointment by calling the Coronavirus helpline or emailing cancelpcrtest@gov.je. As cases of COVID infection increase throughout the winter months, it is extremely important that testing capacity is freed up to ensure everyone can access a PCR test quickly and easily."

It is important that all education staff and secondary school students continue to take part in the schools LFT programme, where LFT testing should be carried out twice a week and submitted on the online portal. Education staff and students can register for the schools LFT programme [online](#).

For nursery, school and college direct contacts, free LFT kits will be available from nurseries, schools and colleges on Thursday, 25 November.

Students and staff members who are currently booked in for a PCR test as a result of being identified as a direct contact do not need to attend the appointment and are requested to call the Coronavirus helpline on 0800 735 5566 or email cancelpcrtest@gov.je to cancel.