

Friday, 22 January 2021

Lateral Flow Testing starts in schools

Every staff member in primary and secondary schools and colleges, as well as students in Years 11 and above, will be offered Lateral Flow Testing (LFT) for COVID-19 on their school premises.

This rapid regular testing, also called Lateral Flow Testing (LFT), is designed to provide an additional layer of preventative safety measures in schools by detecting asymptomatic cases to help keep schools open and children in continuous face-to-face learning.

Up to a third of individuals who test positive for COVID-19 have no symptoms at all and can therefore spread the virus unknowingly. This is why this form of testing those without symptoms is vital.

This week, the testing team visited some secondary and primary schools to train staff and some students for the roll out of the new testing process, which can return results within 20 to 30 minutes of being taken.

Lateral Flow Tests are also used amongst staff in the NHS UK.

These tests will be offered weekly once the roll out is completed and will run on top of the current PCR workforce testing programme. The teacher and staff PCR testing is also being increased from every eight weeks to every six weeks.

Lateral Flow Testing allows for a weekly testing in schools, and studies show they will identify up to three-quarters of any positives, including those pupils or staff showing no symptoms.

The Lateral Flow Tests will be self-administered under supervision in schools, at a dedicated testing area on-site, and any positive cases will self-isolate and then take an urgent PCR test.

New information about the Contact Tracing process in schools, colleges and nurseries, has also been updated on this [new webpage](#) on gov.je

Acting Education Minister, Deputy Jeremy Maçon, said: "This rapid testing will improve confidence in attending schools and ensure young people can benefit from face-to-face teaching as much as possible.

"Testing in schools adds an additional layer of protection for students and staff, which helps with safety, consistency and reduce anxiety in schools.

"I would like to thank everyone involved who has helped to make this happen and encourage schools, parents, and students to support and to take up this testing offer so that we can help protect our community while they await their vaccine."

Health Minister, Deputy Richard Renouf, added: "Lateral Flow Testing is an additional step in our reassurance and protective measures, on top of the wide range of effective measures already in schools and colleges, including workforce PCR testing for staff, increased hygiene, ventilation, and wearing of face coverings in communal areas where appropriate.

"Testing in larger numbers will quickly pick up trends and we can respond appropriately to keep schools open and as safe as possible. This regularity means that infections in schools can be picked up much more quickly, before they develop into clusters or outbreaks."

Deputy Medical Officer of Health, Dr Ivan Muscat, who has written to all primary and secondary school staff, students in Years 11 and above and their parents, to explain the process, added: "Lateral flow devices are vital in helping us to detect COVID-19 cases that we wouldn't otherwise know about. This means that we can break chains of transmission.

"When used in schools, these tests can help to keep students and staff safer by helping us quickly identify most of those who are unknowingly carrying the virus and prevent them from passing it on to others."

Headteacher of Haute Valleé Secondary School, Stuart Hughes, whose staff received the training this week said: "We were delighted to have received initial training on Lateral Flow Testing and are finalising our plans for roll-out to students and staff. This is another tool in our arsenal to combat COVID-19 in schools and the community and will provide reassurance that asymptomatic individuals are identified quickly in schools."

Sam Cooper, Headteacher of d'Auvergne School, who was one of the first primary schools to take up the testing yesterday (Thursday), added: "The Lateral Flow Testing was really simple and quick to self-administer, with clear instructions and support provided by the great team. The results were available swiftly and, as a Headteacher, I am reassured that we have an extra layer of assessment and protection for our school

community. This extra safety measure is most welcome and I recommend it to those working across our education service.”

Video link: A Year 11 student at Haute Valleé Secondary School gives a step by step guide of the Lateral Flow Testing process: https://youtu.be/b-3_2Jsx5G4