

FAQs for Headteachers

You may find these FAQs useful for answering some of your parent's questions either in person or on social media.

How do I sign my child up?

To take part, parents need to complete an online consent and an enrolment questionnaire by following this link, [UTC Warrington](#) and entering your schools URN [142899](#), if you are over 16 you can fill in the form yourself.

Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being conducted by Public Health England (PHE) in partnership with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. They are working with the Department for Education and it is funded by the Department for Health and Social Care.

IQVIA, a specialist testing company, will be responsible for arranging appointments with the schools and carrying out the tests. The ONS and Public Health England will analyse the data.

Why should I / my child take part?

This study will allow scientists to understand who is and has been infected with the coronavirus (COVID-19), even if the people infected haven't realised it at the time. As we know, it is possible that some pupils and staff might be infected with the virus and not develop symptoms.

The study will help assess the role of schools in the coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission and how transmission within and from school settings can be minimised.

The swab test is very simple, quick and non-invasive (see below). Your child's participation will help us to better understand the virus. This can help reduce school closures and further lockdowns.

Do I /does my child have to take part?

Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without providing a reason and without penalty. Parents or carers may also withdraw their child from the study at any time without giving a reason.

Who can take part?

All school staff from primary and secondary schools participating in the study are eligible. All pupils from primary schools participating in the study are eligible. Pupils from two consecutive years chosen from secondary schools participating in the study are eligible.

How is the test taken on children?

For children in primary school, the swab is taken by a nurse or trained professional. For adults or those in secondary school, the swab is done by themselves, with help from a study worker who is on hand to ensure the swab is taken correctly.

The swab is placed near the entrance to the nose and wiggled around for a few seconds. It does not go deep into the nose and no force is needed. It is **not** a deep nasal swab or throat swab as seen in the COVID-19 testing centres.

Oral fluid (saliva) samples will also be collected from children. The study workers will play a video to show every pupil how to take the oral fluid (saliva) sample. This involves putting a small sponge into the mouth for two minutes to test for the virus and antibodies against the virus.

Is it one set of tests or will there be follow ups?

Yes, after the first visit in the school we plan to arrange five more appointments, one at the end of Autumn term and two in each of the remaining two terms in the 2020 to 2021 school year. These will be very similar to the initial round of testing.

What is an antibody?

Antibodies are one way that your body fights an infection. It takes between two and three weeks for your body to make enough of them to fight the infection. When you get better, they still stay in your blood at low levels – this is what helps you not get the same infection again.

How have I been selected?

Your primary or secondary school head teacher has agreed for the school to take part in the study.

What will you do with the results?

We will notify all participants of their results as soon as possible via the Test and Trace system. Once we have collected results from all of the schools taking part in the study, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) will produce statistics about the number of school pupils and staff that have the coronavirus (COVID-19) or have previously been infected by the virus over the course of the school year.

The analysis from this study will help us work out the best way to manage the pandemic and minimise transmission in schools. The ONS will produce a report following each round of testing and publish it online. Any data presented by ONS will not identify any individuals or schools.

The results of this study may also be presented at academic meetings and may be published in medical journals in a de-identified manner.

What happens if my child has to isolate and I can't work?

If your child tests positive for COVID - 19 asked to self-isolate and you're on a low income, unable to work from home and will lose income as a result, you may be entitled to a payment of £500 from your local authority under the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. More information about this support can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support/claiming-financial-support-under-the-test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme>

Have the study workers been tested for coronavirus (COVID-19)?

All study workers will be offered routine tests for the (COVID-19) before visiting the schools and follow the NHS recommendations about the appropriate level of personal protective equipment (PPE) to use.

What will you do with my nose swab and oral fluid (saliva) sample or blood sample?

Your nose swab will be tested at one of the national testing centres using the standard coronavirus (COVID-19) test. We will report any positive swab results to individuals and schools as quickly as possible, ideally within 48 hours so that the individual and household members can self-isolate and schools can take appropriate actions to protect staff and pupils who may have come into contact with the positive participant.

The oral fluid (saliva) and blood finger prick samples will be processed by scientists. We will send the result of this test to yourself. The processing time is generally longer, so you can expect to receive your results within four to eight weeks.

How long will you keep my nose swab and oral fluid (saliva) sample?

Any remaining samples at the end of the survey will be stored for future tests that might help us better understand viral infections and immunity.

What if I change my mind during the study?

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can leave the study at any time without explanation. This includes after you have enrolled onto the study online and before the testing and if you have already given any samples or blood.

If the tests have already been done when you change your mind, we will still use the data from them, unless you tell us not to, because they are very important for our study to get a good picture of who has had the coronavirus (COVID-19) across the UK.

Can I find out my results?

Yes, everyone will receive their results. If your child's nose swab tests positive for the virus, we will phone you as soon as the results become available. We will also inform the school and the local Test and Trace programme, run by National Institute for Health Protection. You and everyone in the household should follow current guidance on the NHS website. We may contact you for more information or to test other members of the household. This is to better understand how the virus affects families of school staff.

You will also receive the results of your antibody test. Although the results will tell you if you have antibodies against the virus, it only means that you have previously been exposed to the virus. It is currently unclear how much protection this gives a person.

What happens if the nose swab tested positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19)?

As required by law, we will refer your positive swab test result and personal data (including your name, contact details, postcode and ethnicity) to the NHS Test and Trace system.

Everyone in your household should follow the guidance and isolate even if they don't have any symptoms. The current guidance can be found on the NHS website.

If you develop any symptoms during this period, please follow the government's advice about how long to isolate for starting from the first day of the symptoms. You can return to school once the guidance has been followed and you are well and have no symptoms.

What happens if the antibody test is positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19)?

A positive antibody test means that you have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus at some point in the past and developed antibodies to the virus. It does not mean you are infected with the virus now.

We do not yet know what being positive for antibodies means in terms of whether this will protect people from getting coronavirus again or prevent them passing the virus onto others. Anyone who obtains a positive antibody test should continue to abide by current self-isolation guidelines, wear face coverings and get tested if you have symptoms. The presence of antibodies signals that the body has staged an immune response to the virus, but it does not necessarily mean that person is now immune to COVID-19. That is one of the reasons we are visiting the same people lots of times in the survey.

Similarly, not everyone who has had coronavirus develops antibodies at all, and antibody levels can also fall after having had the infection, so that the antibody test can no longer detect them. So being negative for antibodies does not mean someone has not had coronavirus.

How else will you use my data?

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is an impartial, non-political body that has a statutory mission to produce and promote statistics that serve the public good. For us to produce useful statistics, we may link your data we obtain from this study to other survey and administrative data that we hold. Further information on what we use data for is available from www.ons.gov.uk.

The ONS will continue to hold your data collected from this study for as long as it remains useful for statistical research and production. The ONS may provide access to de-identified data to accredited researchers for accredited research purposes via accredited processing environments, where it is lawful and ethical to do so. Access will only be provided to support valuable new research insights about UK society and the economy that are considered to be to the public good.

The ONS does not sell personal information or share data for any purpose other than accredited research that is shown to be of public benefit.

Further help

If you have any further questions on the COVID-19 Schools Infection Survey (SIS), you can telephone IQVIA on 0800 917 9679 or email schoolinfectionsurvey@nhs.net