

11 January 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian,

NHS Test and Trace: COVID-19 testing for students

We are working to keep our college 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'. Along with the other protective measures we are taking, these tests will help staff and students to remain in college safely. Up to one third of people who have coronavirus experience no symptoms. By testing we will help to stop the virus spread and help to keep our college open as safely as possible. The test is voluntary, but we would encourage everyone to take it.

We will be testing all staff and students who want to participate from week commencing 8th February 2021 (subject to national guidance at the time). We have also uploaded an instructional leaflet with some more information; this has been communicated to your child along with a consent form. Please ensure that you discuss the test with your child prior to them giving consent. For a small number of students aged we will also require parental consent.

Those taking the test will be supervised by trained staff and volunteers. The Lateral Flow Tests are quick and easy using a swab of your nose and throat. For under 18s, staff will oversee the swab process. Results (which take around half an hour from testing) will be shared directly with staff and students participating.

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 18, 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). The College 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 you are ordering a PCR test yourselves, you should choose to visit a drive-through test site if possible, as it is faster than requesting a home test. Our nearest test centre is located at Jacksons Landing, Hartlepool Marina or at the Headland. During this time while they wait for the PCR result (via text/email) they will need to self-isolate. If the PCR test returns a positive result the whole household 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 college and resume their activities as normal. 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 college tests positive?

A close contact of someone in college who has tested positive for COVID-19 will be able to return to college if they agree to be tested once a day (each day that they are in college) 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 the College who will still need to self-isolate. Further details will be provided at the time, but if you would prefer to self-isolate instead of doing daily testing, you can.

What if my son/daughter develops symptoms?

This testing programme at college is for people with no symptoms. If your son/daughter 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) the whole household 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 this information in any other language or format or if you have any questions. You can contact the college on 01429 295111 or email enquiries@hartlepoolfe.ac.uk

Yours faithfully



Darren Hankey
Principal & Chief Executive