

Information Sheet for Parent/legal guardian (carer)

COVID-19 Schools Infection Survey

The study is being conducted by Public Health England in partnership with the Office for National Statistics, and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

We are inviting a sample of schools in England to take part in testing for COVID-19. We need to find out how many school pupils and staff have COVID-19 infection, how many have developed antibodies against the virus and how this changes over the course of the year. The information we collect will help inform policies to protect school pupils and staff.

Visits to the schools and testing will be organised and undertaken by our partner organisation IQVIA and study workers from other select partner organisations. The companies involved in running the survey will only use information about you for this survey – they will not pass it on to anyone not involved in the survey.

Why are we doing this study?

We need to assess the role of schools in the coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission and how transmission within and from school settings can be minimised.

It is possible that some students and staff might be infected with the virus and not develop any symptoms.

This study is voluntary, your child does not have to take part, and you or your child can withdraw at any round of testing. If some tests have already been done when you change your mind, we will still use the data from them unless individuals concerned tell us not to, because it is very important for our study to get a good picture of who has had COVID-19.

The data collected will be used to produce statistics on the number of school pupils and staff that have the coronavirus (COVID-19) or previously been infected by the virus over the course of the school year.

The analyses from this study will help us work out the best way to manage the COVID-19 pandemic and minimise transmission in schools. We will produce a report following each round of testing and publish on the ONS website. 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 will happen if I agree for my child to take part?

We are asking you to complete an online consent form and an enrolment questionnaire. Once this is submitted, your child will be enrolled into the survey. We will also ask you to complete a follow up questionnaire after testing. In these questionnaires we will ask about you, your child and their health, and additional information about other household members.

A testing team coordinated by IQVIA will visit your child's school to collect the following samples:

- Nasal swab – this will involve rubbing a soft cotton bud on the inside of your child's nostrils to test for the virus. Your child may wish to do this themselves or the study staff will help. (Please note: this is not the invasive nasopharyngeal swab that takes a sample from deep into the back of the throat and nose).
- 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.

Study staff will check with the children that they are willing to take part before testing starts on the day. If your child shows signs of distress at the time of testing, then they will be offered the option of withdrawing from the test at that time.

Study staff will wear aprons, gloves and face masks/visors when taking the samples or helping your child to take the samples themselves. The children will be supervised by school staff at all times. Some samples may be requested by post if your child is absent from school because of illness, for example.

What will happen next?

We plan to arrange 5 more appointments, one at the end of Autumn term and two in each of the remaining two terms.

We will inform you in advance of the dates of each appointment as soon as it is agreed with the school and will ask you to complete a short online questionnaire following each appointment. The testing of the samples will be carried out by independent laboratories which will receive anonymous data regarding participants. **What other information will be collected?**

We would like to know if your child or anybody in the household is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms at the time you complete the questionnaire. For this reason, we would also like to collect the name of all the people in the household in the questionnaire.

It is important that every adult in the household over the age of 16 sees the invite letter and this information sheet before the enrolment questionnaire is completed online. Please remember to follow the national and school guidelines on what to do if your child or anyone in your household becomes unwell and might have COVID-19. You can inform us about illness and the results of any COVID-19 tests that are done by emailing schoolinfectionsurvey@nhs.net.

Will you tell me my child's results?

Yes, everyone will receive their results. If your child's nasal swab tests positive for the virus, we will phone you as soon as the results become available. We will inform the school and as required by law, we will refer the positive swab test result and personal data (including name, contact details, postcode and ethnicity) to the NHS Test and Trace programme.

Your child 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 children.

The oral fluid (saliva) sample will also be tested for antibodies against the virus. We will report the saliva antibody test results to you as soon as we can, but this may take a few weeks. Although the results will tell you if your child has antibodies against the virus, it only means that your child has previously been exposed to the virus. It is currently unclear how much protection this gives a person.

What are the benefits and risks of taking part?

We will report the results of your child's tests to you so that you will know if your child is infected with, or has antibodies against, the virus. The overall results will help Public Health England, the Department for Education and Department for Health and Social Care make important decisions about protecting pupils and staff in schools.

While some people may find the nasal swab mildly uncomfortable, please be reassured that this will last no more than a few seconds. This is not the nasopharyngeal swab that takes a sample from deep into the back of the nose.

If your child tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) it is important that you keep your child at home. Under current government guidance you could be fined if you do not keep your child at home and self-isolate. 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.**

The school will liaise with the local Health Protection Team to assess the risk to other school pupils and staff. Depending on the circumstances the school will decide on whether to isolate bubbles/class or school closure. The safety and protection of pupils and staff health is important during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

What will you do with my information?

We will need to collect some personal information, including names, dates of birth, contact details and health information for your child and other household members. We need this information to understand the results of the tests that we perform and to contact you to give you the results. If the swab test is positive, we will also inform the school and the NHS Test and Trace programme so that all those who might have come into contact with your child can be traced to stop the spread of the virus.

We will keep all the information securely in accordance with the [General Data Protection Regulations \(GDPR\)](#) and the [Data Protection Act 2018](#). The reports produced will not identify you, your child or anyone in your household.

The ONS has the statutory objective to promote and safeguard the production of official statistics that serve the public good. In order for us to produce statistics we may link the data we obtain through this survey with other survey and administrative data that we hold. **Further information on what we use data for is available.** All our uses of data will comply with UK Statistics Authority's ethical framework. **Further information on the ethical framework is available.** The ONS will continue to hold the data collected through this survey 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. When making this de-identified data available we may link the data we obtain through this survey with other survey and administrative data that we hold. Access will only be provided to support valuable new research insights about UK society and the economy that are considered to be in the public good.

Does my child have to take part?

Participation is completely voluntary. If you choose not to take part, this will in no way affect the care and education that your child receives. You can also decide to withdraw your child from any round of testing, without giving a reason by emailing schoolinfectionsurvey@nhs.net and enter "Withdraw" in the subject of the email. We would like to keep the information and results that we might already have collected unless you tell us not to.

What if I have any concerns?

If you have any concerns about the use of personal data or want to find out more about your rights under data protection legislation, please see the following data protection webpages or contact the Data Protection Officer via email.

- Public Health England data protection page or contact dataprotectionofficer@phe.gov.uk
- London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine data protection policy or contact DPO@lshtm.ac.uk
- ONS's data protection page or contact DPO@Statistics.gov.uk

Thank you for your time