

3 December 2020

To: Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP, Minister of State for School Standards, Department for Education
Cc: Members of the Schools Stakeholder Advisory Group

Re: Community Testing in Schools and Colleges

Dear Nick,

I wanted to thank you, Pippa and Adrian for inviting me to attend the Schools Stakeholder Advisory Group call on Monday which I found very constructive and insightful. It was a really valuable opportunity to hear the contributions from colleagues across the education sector and the contributions from representatives of Unison, ASCL, ADCS, NASUWT and the CST among others were very helpful.

I hope we can continue to work together to address the issues raised as quickly as possible and that we can continue the dialogue. As a team, we want to engage on the design of communications materials and I'm attaching some relevant documents on mass testing in schools and colleges including:

- A Q&A answering some of the issues raised in the meeting
- A schools and colleges operational toolkit
- A schools and colleges communications handbook
- A visual guide for school leaders on managing positive cases

There are many more materials such as training videos, letters to parents and consent forms being co-produced with schools and colleges which we can provide access to. We are keen to ensure these meet the needs of staff to reduce the burden on schools and colleges as we scale up testing, and look at tests being self-administered where appropriate.


Schools and colleges have played a hugely important part in the fight against Covid-19, in many different ways and it's important we take a moment to recognise the incredible work that has been done by all school staff to stay open, keep pupils and other staff as safe as possible and deliver the curriculum including remotely for those who are in isolation.

There are a number of live pilots which test staff and pupils in Key Stage 3+ in schools and colleges. As well as identifying asymptomatic cases that might otherwise be missed, special dispensation has been granted for a new approach to bubble management (Test to enable) in the pilots. This will allow those whose bubbles test positive to continue in education if they take a daily lateral flow test, something as both a parent and someone who has been in self-isolation I would personally welcome!

However, there are some logistical, financial and workforce issues to address as these are scaled more widely. We would welcome stakeholder comments on these.

School and college staff have been critical in helping pilots to work, with vital support and as a trusted voice of reassurance for pupils and parents. I hope we can continue to work together.

With all best wishes,



Baroness Dido Harding
Executive Chair, NHS Test & Trace