

17th December 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

You may be aware that there have been announcements this week regarding the testing of secondary school students for Covid. These are an important development at a time when there is rising concern about the rapid increase in the rates of COVID-19 infections across Wandsworth and the whole of London.

Significantly, the Government has announced that families with secondary school children can now access testing even if none of you have any symptoms. This offer is now open and you can book a test for all adults and children in your family through the national website at <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

Or if you prefer you can book a test by phone by ringing 119.

I would especially like to request that you get all of your children tested before they return to secondary school next term and ideally during the week beginning 27th December. If we all do this then this will help detect positive cases - including asymptomatic cases - isolating them at home to recover while keeping the whole school community safe.

When asked to specify a reason for requesting a test please select the following option from the menu:

'My local council or health protection team has asked me (or someone I live with) to get a test, even though I do not have symptoms'

These tests are not mandatory and form part of a national programme to reduce the potential of the virus spreading. Anyone who does not have symptoms of COVID-19 but has previously tested positive for coronavirus will not need to be retested for 90 days.

It is important to remember that the test result tells you whether you have Covid-19 at the moment you take it. It does not tell you whether you've previously had Covid-19. If you get a negative result, it does not mean you will remain Covid-negative for any specified length of time. This means that it is vitally important that we all continue our individual efforts in following the current rules.

So the simple messaging around HANDS, FACE and SPACE remain crucial and if any of your family develop symptoms please do isolate at HOME and book yourself a COVID test as quickly as you can (see <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> for all the latest guidance).

Testing at Schools

The Government has also announced that it will be rolling out rapid testing at all secondary schools from January. The aim is to give as many students as possible the opportunity to continue to receive high quality face to face education while stopping transmission of the virus.

Under this programme, all staff will be able to take a lateral flow test weekly which will help identify those who may be carrying the virus without displaying symptoms, reducing the risk of transmission. Students and staff identified as close contacts of someone who has tested positive will also be able to be tested daily, with the results given within 30 minutes. Anyone who agrees to be tested in this way will then not need to self-isolate, unless they themselves test positive. In doing so, it is hoped that students can continue to receive as much face to face learning and teaching as possible.



**Southfields
Academy**

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Testing will be voluntary but those who are eligible for tests are strongly encouraged to participate to reduce the risk of transmission within the Academy. In line with routine infection control practice, close contacts who decide not to be tested daily will need to self-isolate in line with Government guidance. The Government has produced information for parents which can be accessed here <https://dfemedia.blog.gov.uk/2020/12/15/mass-testing-in-schools-your-questions-answered/>

I am confident that the measures we have put in place have contributed to the low incidence of confirmed Covid cases and I thank you all again for doing your part by adhering to the rules and following the guidance. I shall be in touch in the New Year when I will hopefully know more detail about how the testing will work. In the meantime, I wish you and your families a peaceful Christmas.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wanda Golinska', written in a cursive style.

Wanda Golinska
Headteacher

