

LGA school's workforce – latest news from DfE

Covers:

1. Testing in schools
2. Use of schools as polling stations
3. Updated guidance for initial teacher training (ITT) providers

1. Testing in schools

Secondary Schools

Secondary schools and colleges should continue to test their staff regularly, **which should be twice weekly, 3-5 days apart, where possible**. Students should be tested twice upon their first return to school or college, as has been the case since the start of January.

We have **paused daily contact testing** in all but a small number of secondary schools and colleges, where it will continue alongside detailed evaluation. This is in response to NHS Test and Trace and Public Health England (PHE) publishing reviewed advice in light of the higher prevalence and rates of transmission of the new variant. A statement from PHE can be found [here](#).

In addition, as announced by PHE on 25 January, **confirmatory testing has also been temporarily removed for LFT tests taken at test sites** until prevalence lowers again. Positive LFT results at test sites will trigger the legal duty to self-isolate, self-isolation payments and contact tracing.

It is vital that secondary schools and colleges **record their test results on the Test & Trace Log Results Website**, as this data will be used to calculate funding. We have provided a [Workforce Planning Tool](#) which illustrates workforce requirements and associated funding. This allows institutions to calculate an estimate of funding which they may receive. Actual allocations will be based on the number of bays calculated as needed to deliver the number of tests completed (measured by the number of test results recorded on the school or college's individual account on the Test & Trace Log Results Website).

Staff displaying symptoms must still self-isolate and take a PCR test. The asymptomatic testing programme does not replace current testing policy for those with symptoms.

Guidance on asymptomatic testing in specialist settings is available [here](#).

Primary Schools, School-Based Nurseries and Maintained Nursery Schools

On 18 Jan we published a [guidance page to support primary schools, school-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools](#) to carry out rapid testing on staff.

Staff should take **two LFD tests a week, 3-4 days apart**, before coming into work which is in line with the community testing programme.

In line with clinical advice, confirmatory **PCR testing will remain in place for primary school staff and nursery staff in scope** for whom testing is done at home, in order to minimise the risk that incorrectly reported positive results are registered. This is in line with other self-reporting settings.

Primary school staff calling 119 to book a PCR test need to say that they work at a primary school.

Staff displaying symptoms **at any time** must still self-isolate and take a PCR test. The asymptomatic testing programme does not replace current testing policy for those with symptoms.

Deliveries in primary schools have now all been made – an updated delivery schedule is available on the Portal. The delivery schedule for Maintained Nursery Schools is also now on the Portal, with over 30% of deliveries having already been made and the rest due to take place week commencing 1 February.

2. Use of schools as polling stations in the forthcoming election period

The government has confirmed that local elections will go ahead on Thursday 6 May as planned. Given significant disruptions already to education this year, returning officers have been asked to avoid using schools as polling stations, where it is practically possible to do so. In exceptional circumstances, where schools are used as polling stations, we have asked that returning officers work with schools to minimise any disruption.

Where possible, pupils eligible to attend on Thursday 6 May should continue to do so. However, if necessary, for the safe operation of polling stations and to limit risks to staff and pupils, schools may ask some pupils not to attend and instead provide remote education on Thursday 6 May. On-site provision should still be available to vulnerable children and the children of critical workers on election day. Schools should not close to pupils on Friday 7 May.

In a letter to returning officers and schools, we have set out the detail of additional funding made available to local authorities to help returning officers avoid disruption to schools and cover the costs of cleaning, including any cleaning taking place after polls close, so that schools can be open to pupils the following day. The following measures are deemed broadly proportionate before schools resume use of their whole estate: ventilating any rooms used for polling, via full window and door opening to fresh outside air for at least 1 hour; and after ventilation, sanitising all hand touchpoints (e.g. door handles, rails, seats used by polling officers, desks).

The [letter from Department for Education and Cabinet Office to all schools and returning officers](#) setting out expectations for the forthcoming elections has now been published on GOV.UK.

3. Updated guidance for initial teacher training (ITT) providers

We recognise there has been disruption to initial teacher training (ITT) throughout the 2020 to 2021 academic year for reasons related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. We also know there is variance in the disruption experienced by ITT trainees during the 2020 to 2021 academic year.

For this reason, we are preparing legislation to enable ITT providers to recommend trainees for qualified teacher status (QTS) if they are satisfied that the trainee has demonstrated adequate progress towards meeting the Teachers' Standards during their course, and would have met them, were it not for disruption relating to coronavirus (COVID-19). Providers should only recommend trainees for QTS in this way where appropriate and necessary.

Further detail can be found in our [guidance on initial teacher training](#).