

13<sup>th</sup> October 2021

### Clarification of advice around the use of lateral flow device (LFD) tests

Dear parents and carers

I am writing in relation to recent concerns raised about lateral flow device (LFD) tests and to clarify the public health advice.

It appears that many people are testing positive using LFD tests to then receive a negative PCR test result. The media have reported this problem as being widespread throughout the South West of England.

We have also found this to be the case over the last few weeks. Around 4 in every 5 LFD positive results are followed up by a negative PCR result.

#### Why is this happening?

We do not know why this is happening. The matter is being investigated by UKHSA (previously Public Health England).

What we do know is that the PCR tests are the 'gold standard' for detecting Covid-19. They are far more reliable than LFD tests. However, neither test is fool proof.

#### What precautions can we take?

Gloucestershire schools have been advised by the local authority to make a small adjustment to their advice to parents.

If a student receives a positive LFD test, they should still get a confirmatory PCR test, and stay at home while they await the result.

If the PCR test is negative, they may return to school **UNLESS** they have clear Covid-19 symptoms (i.e. raised temperature, persistent cough, or loss of smell or taste) **OR** they self-identify as a close contact of a recent positive PCR case.

To be clear, the advice is to isolate for 10 days if:

1. You receive a positive PCR result.
2. You receive a negative PCR **BUT** have a positive LFD result **AND** are either symptomatic or a close contact of a known positive case.



I appreciate that this new advice is more nuanced than previously. We trust your judgement to decide whether your child meets the second criteria.

Should I continue to use LFD tests?

Yes! LFD tests are designed to pick up asymptomatic cases. If everyone tests twice a week, we are able to identify cases early and prevent people passing on the virus.

The false-positives are a nuisance, but we should continue to follow public health advice as this is set down by the scientists, and they know more about this than most of us.

We will be issuing new batches of LFD tests to all students before the half term break. Please continue to test twice-weekly on a Thursday and Sunday night, and report positive results to the NHS and to us on the dedicated [covid@farmors.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:covid@farmors.gloucs.sch.uk) address.

However, it is very important that we all use LFDs correctly:

- LFD tests should be taken twice a week, no more.
- LFD tests are NOT designed for people with symptoms. If symptomatic, get a PCR test.
- LFD tests must be used correctly, or they can generate false results. Please read the instructions carefully. You really have to swab well for them to work.

I know that it is tempting to reach for a LFD test whenever you feel unwell. However, this misuse could be leading to the high level of false positives.

Is school the best place for my child to be?

Definitely. We will inevitably have more cases for young people through the winter. However, education is very important and we must find ways of managing the risk.

The number of positive cases at Farmor's has so far been lower than the national average for secondary schools. Cases have levelled off over the past week and we expect numbers to settle over half term. We are monitoring cases closely and will increase controls if numbers increase.

Covid-19 continues to be a significant challenge for schools, but please be assured that we take it seriously and will respond in a rational and proportionate way to events as they unfold.

Yours sincerely



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