



## **Antigen Testing of asymptomatic children in primary school pods where a confirmed case of COVID-19 is identified**

25 November 2021

Dear Principal,

This is an update on plans to provide for the use of antigen testing in certain circumstances in children who are asymptomatic and part of a classroom pod, where there is a confirmed case of COVID-19. These measures will be in place from Monday 29 November.

The HSE confirms that asymptomatic (well) children are low risk for transmission of COVID-19. Due to the measures, you and your staff have implemented over the course of this pandemic, together with the support of parents and students, schools have remained relatively low risk environments and have not been a driver of transmission of COVID-19 in children. Offering antigen tests to children who are identified as part of a pod in which there was a confirmed case of COVID-19, is an additional measure to support parents and schools. Children who are well and have no COVID-19 or respiratory symptoms can remain in school while they are doing their antigen tests. The HSE, supported by the Department of Education has asked parents and guardians to ensure that they do not send their child to school if they have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or if their child has a positive PCR or antigen test.

Parents and guardians are requested to inform their child's school principal immediately if their child has a positive (detected) COVID-19 PCR test result. The school principal should then contact the parents or guardians of the other children in the relevant pod e.g. table within that class and advise them how they can request antigen tests for their child should they wish to. School principals should not share any identifying details of the confirmed case.

As the antigen testing programme is voluntary, school principals do not need to gather details of the number of children who do antigen testing and they should not keep any records relating to individual children's results or whether or not they have been part of the antigen testing process.

We know, depending on the class size and the infrastructure, pods size can vary, however we are reminding school principals and staff to ensure that pod sizes are kept as small as is feasible. This is to protect against onward spread of infection. If two or more positive COVID-19 cases arise in a class, within a seven-day period, outside of a single pod, antigen testing as above can be offered to the full class. We would ask school principals to inform parents or guardians of children in the relevant pod by text message (followed by letter/email), that they are able to request antigen tests for their child. School principals need to also provide the school roll number, for parents to be able to access the antigen tests.

When a principal is notified that a child has a positive (detected) COVID-19 PCR test result school principals are asked to text the other parents in the pod and send them and the



suggested letter below, on how they can access the free antigen tests for their children in the identified pod.

Parents will need to provide their name and home address together with the school's roll number when they call to organise delivery of the antigen tests. A box of 5 antigen tests will then be delivered to the address provided by the parents with instructions on how and when to do the tests. A video has been developed for parents to assist with administering the test. Parents should carry out one antigen test on the day that they receive the box of tests, a second test 2 days later, and a third test 2 days after that.

A QR code will be provided to afford parents the opportunity to upload their test result, to inform the HSE, if they wish.

**All children in the pod can continue to attend school** as long as they remain asymptomatic and they do not have a positive COVID-19 antigen or PCR test result.

It is important to note that participation in this programme of antigen testing is not mandatory and well children with no symptoms in the pod of the confirmed COVID-19 case can continue to attend school regardless of whether or not they have participated in this antigen-testing programme.

Parents or guardians are not being requested to inform the school of the results of their child's antigen tests. Children's normal educational experience should not be impacted in any way by the antigen testing programme.

**It is really important to remind everyone that if you have any respiratory symptoms you should self-isolate at home and get a COVID-19 PCR test.** Even if a child's COVID-19 test is negative, if they continue to have respiratory symptoms they should not go to school as they may spread other viral infections.

The National Public Health Emergency team (NPHE) has different advice for unvaccinated people of all ages, including children who are identified as close contacts in a household setting. If a case is within a household, all unvaccinated children less than 13 years of age must restrict their movements and get a COVID-19 PCR test on day 0 and day 10. This is because the household remains the highest risk for transmission of COVID-19.

As an additional precautionary measure for staff working in the classroom, where there is a confirmed case in a pod, an SNA or teacher working closely with children in the pod may also avail of the antigen tests and request them in the same way as parents/guardians are instructed. Where there is an additional case in a second pod within seven days, then the class teacher and other staff members working in the classroom may request the antigen tests through the Freephone number. This is an entirely voluntary measure and staff should continue to attend the workplace unless they develop symptoms or receive a detected result on the antigen test.



Thank you for your support in implementing this measure.

Yours faithfully

Deirdre Shanley  
Assistant Secretary

**For principals' use if a parent informs the principal that their child has received a positive PCR test for COVID-19**

1. Text message to send to parents of children in a pod where a case of COVID-19 has been confirmed/

Dear Parent/guardian: I have been informed that a child in your child xx's pod has tested positive for COVID-19. If you would like to avail of antigen testing for your child, please call this Freephone number 1800 110055. Your child should continue to attend school as long as they do not display any symptoms of COVID-19 or receive a positive antigen test. If your child has any symptoms of COVID-19 please book a PCR test. Please see my letter sent to you by email/Aladdin etc.

2. Text for a letter to send to parents of children in a pod where a case of COVID-19 has been confirmed

Dear Parent/Guardian

I am writing to inform you that a child in your child xx's pod in yy class has tested positive for COVID-19 and their parent/guardian has advised me of this.

Under the antigen testing in primary school children in pods programme, you are eligible to apply for antigen tests for your child.

If you wish to do this, please telephone this Freephone number 1800 110055 to request antigen tests for your child in the identified pod.

You will need to provide your child's name and home address together with the school's roll number XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX in order to receive the test.

A box of 5 antigen tests will be delivered to the address provided with instructions on how and when to do the tests.

There is a video on the HSE website showing how a parent can undertake an antigen test on a child.

A QR code will be provided to afford parents the opportunity to inform the HSE of a test result, if they wish.



**All children in the pod can continue to attend school** as long as they remain asymptomatic and they do not have a positive COVID-19 antigen or PCR test result. Participation in this programme of antigen testing is not mandatory and children with no symptoms in the pod of the confirmed COVID-19 case can continue to attend school regardless of whether or not they have participated in this antigen-testing programme.

Parents or guardians are not being requested to inform the school of the results of their child's antigen tests. Children's normal educational experience should not be impacted in any way by the antigen testing programme.

**If your child has any respiratory symptoms they should self-isolate at home and get a COVID-19 PCR test.** Even if a child's COVID-19 test is negative, if they continue to have respiratory symptoms they should not go to school as they may spread other viral infections.

There is different advice for unvaccinated people of all ages, including children who are identified as close contacts in a household setting. If a case is within a household, all unvaccinated children less than 13 years of age must restrict their movements and get a COVID-19 PCR test on day 0 and day 10. This is because the household remains the highest risk for transmission of COVID 19.

Yours faithfully

Signature