

Information Sheet for Parent/legal guardian (carer)

COVID-19 Schools Infections Survey 2 (SIS2)

The study is being conducted by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), in partnership with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, working with the Department for Education and is funded by the UK Health Security Agency.

We are inviting a sample of schools in England to take part in testing for coronavirus (COVID-19) antibodies. We are not testing for the COVID-19 virus. We need to find out how many school pupils have developed antibodies against the virus and how this changes over the course of the year. The information we collect will help inform policies to protect school pupils and staff.

Visits to the schools and testing will be organised and undertaken by study workers from ONS. Only the people involved in running the study will use information about participants for this study – they will not pass it on to anyone who is not involved in the study.

Why are we doing this study?

We are now looking beyond COVID-19 transmission in schools and want to inform policies to aid school recovery.

This study is voluntary, so schools and pupils do not have to take part and can withdraw at any round of testing. If some tests have already been completed when they change their minds, we will still use the data from them unless they tell us not to. This is because it is very important for our study to get a good picture of who has had COVID-19 antibodies.

The analysis from this study will inform policies to help with education following the pandemic. We will produce a report following each round of testing and publish it on the ONS website. Any data presented by ONS will not identify any individuals or schools. The results of this study may also be presented at academic meetings and may be published in medical journals in a de-identified manner.

What will happen if I agree for my child to take part?

We are asking you to complete an online consent form and answer some short questions about your child and your household. Once this is submitted, your child will be enrolled on to the study. Unfortunately we are not able to offer testing to children in pre-school/nursery years, so if you have multiple children in a selected school, please only register those who are in reception or above.

We will then ask you to complete an online questionnaire around the time of testing. In this questionnaire we will ask about your child and their health. If your child is a secondary school student, we will also ask your child to fill in part of the questionnaire. We will do this by sending a link to an online survey directly to them, using email or mobile phone details supplied by you at the consent stage. These questions will ask your child about their general health and wellbeing, some questions on whether they have had COVID-19, and their opinions of COVID-19 vaccines. This will be key to informing policies to help children and their education following the pandemic.

A testing team coordinated by ONS will visit your child's school to collect the following sample per term:

- Oral fluid (saliva) sample – this involves putting a small sponge into the mouth for two minutes to test for antibodies against the virus.

Study staff will check with the children that they are willing to take part before testing starts on the day. If your child shows signs of distress at the time of testing, they will then be offered the option of withdrawing from the test at that time.

Study staff will wear appropriate protective clothing when taking the samples or helping your child to take the samples themselves. The children will be supervised by school staff at all times.

What will happen next?

We plan to arrange an appointment in March to conduct antibody testing.

Your child's school will inform you in advance of the dates of each appointment as soon as it is agreed with the school and will ask you and your child to each complete an online questionnaire following each appointment. The testing of the samples will be carried out by UKHSA or affiliated laboratories which will receive anonymous data regarding participants.

What other information will be collected?

We may ask if your child or anybody in the household has experienced COVID-19 symptoms before and during the study when you complete the questionnaire.

Please remember to follow the national and school guidelines on what to do if your child or anyone in your household becomes unwell and might have COVID-19.

Will you tell me my child's results?

Yes, everyone will receive their results.

The oral fluid (saliva) sample will be tested for antibodies against the virus. Where appropriate, we will report the saliva antibody test results to you as soon as we can, but this may take a few months. The results will tell you if your child has antibodies against the virus, and may be able to distinguish whether these are natural antibodies (i.e. your child has been exposed to the virus previously) or whether they are antibodies obtained through vaccination. It is currently unclear how much protection this gives a person.

What are the benefits and risks of taking part?

The overall results will help the UK Health Security Agency and the Department for Education make important decisions about protecting pupils and staff in schools.

What will you do with my information?

We will need to collect some personal information from you, including:

- Names
- Dates of birth
- Contact details
- Health information for your child

We need this information to understand the results of the tests that we perform and to contact participants to give them the results.

If your child is in secondary school, we will ask you to provide the email address and/or mobile phone number of your child so we can contact them directly and invite them to complete the questionnaire.

We will keep all the information securely in accordance with the [General Data Protection Regulations \(GDPR\)](#) and the [Data Protection Act 2018](#), the basis for processing your information is public task, specifically for statistical purposes. The reports produced will not identify you, your child or anyone in your household. The ONS has the statutory objective to promote and safeguard the production of official statistics that serve the public good. In order for us to produce statistics we may link the data we obtain through this study with other survey and administrative data that we hold. We intend to link the information we collect from the Schools Infection Survey to other data sources that can inform us about the impact of the pandemic on schools and young people. For example, we may link data to test and trace records, hospital episode statistics, school absence data and relevant information from the 2021 Census. Data linkage is a method of bringing information from different sources together, about the same individual. For this study data linkage will help us better understand the effects of COVID-19.

[Further information on what we use data for is available.](#)

Ethical approval for this study has been granted by UKHSA Research and Public Health Practice Ethics and Governance Group, LSHTM Research Ethics Committee and the National Statisticians Data Ethics Advisory Committee. All our uses of data will comply with **UK Statistics Authority's ethical framework**. This means that only people who will need to know who you are to deliver the study will be able to access personal information. Further information on the ethical framework is available. The ONS will continue to hold the data collected through this study for as long as it remains useful for statistical research and production. During the study, the ONS will follow a de-identification process, which is used to prevent someone's personal identity from being revealed or identified. As such the ONS may provide access to accredited researchers, via accredited processing environments, where it is lawful and ethical to do so. When making this de-identified data available we may link the data we obtain through this study with other survey and administrative data that we hold. Access will only be provided to support valuable new research insights about UK society and the economy that are considered to be in the public good. We need to manage your information in specific ways for the research to be reliable. This may mean that we won't be able to let you see or change the data we hold about you. We will keep all information about you safe and secure.

ONS and UKHSA are joint data controllers for this study. This means that ONS are collecting and using the data, and some personal data including those listed above will be shared with UKHSA to deliver the study and conduct the antibody testing on anonymised samples. UKHSA data retention period is 8 years, but please contact us if you have any questions or concerns about this. LSHTM and DfE, whilst part of the study, will not see any personal data. But they will access the de-identified data through secure environments as explained above.

Our lawful basis is relied upon under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) Article 6(1)(e). Where the processing also includes special category data our lawful basis is found in Article 9(2)(j).

With your permission, after the study UKHSA would like to store any remaining oral fluid samples so that they may be used in the future for research on infections caused by viruses. The samples will be stored anonymously and it will not be possible to link the sample back to you/your child. Your child can still take part even if you ask us to have the samples destroyed after the tests are complete.

Does my child have to take part?

Participation is completely voluntary. If you choose not to take part, this will in no way affect the care and education that your child receives. You can also decide to withdraw your child from any round of testing, without giving a reason by phoning the **ONS helpline** on **0808 196 1270**. A contact email is available also at **Covid-19@ons.gov.uk** and enter "Withdraw" in the subject of the email. We would like to keep the information and results that we might already have collected unless you tell us not to.

What if I have any concerns?

If you have any concerns about the use of personal data or want to find out more about your rights under data protection legislation, please see the following data protection webpages or contact the Data Protection Officer via email.

- [ONS's data protection page](#) or contact DPO@Statistics.gov.uk
- [The UK Health Security Agency \(UKHSA\) data protection page](#) or contact data_protection@dhsc.gov.uk

Thank you for your time.