

Rapid Covid testing will let pupils stay in school: Classes would not be sent home when one child is coronavirus positive as others can undergo fast screening before carrying on lessons under new Government plan

- Schoolchildren now won't be sent home if one of their classmates tests positive
- Classmates of the infected child would be able to take a rapid test each morning
- They will then attend school as normal provided they are found to be negative

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Whole classes will no longer be sent home when a single pupil tests positive for Covid, under plans being considered by ministers.

Classmates of the infected child would be able to take a rapid test each morning and attend school as normal, provided they are found to be negative.

Currently, an entire bubble is sent home from school for ten days if there is positive case, disrupting the education for dozens of children.

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Whole classes will no longer be sent home when a single pupil tests positive for Covid, under plans being considered by ministers. Students are seen taking part in an online lesson at a school in Halifax

But researchers from the University of Oxford are now recruiting 200 secondary schools in England to try out the new system.

They hope to establish if 'quarantine-release' will encourage more pupils to take the tests and identify more infections.

Study leader Professor Tim Peto told an online lecture: 'Because quarantine is unpopular, we know that lots of people refuse to take up voluntary mass screening, so you didn't pick up all the positives in school.'

'The idea is that you have daily contact testing, allowing people to continue at school in spite of being a contact. The pilot works if the uptake of voluntary testing is increased.'



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A teacher is seen above getting a coronavirus test at a school in Halifax. The Government says secondary pupils should wear masks in class – but this is not mandatory

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The results of the study, sponsored by the Department of Health are expected in June.

News of the proposal came as head teachers demanded that the Government clear up its 'confused and unhelpful' guidelines over masks in classrooms.

Some say the advice has left them wondering whether they can insist on pupils using masks while others have threatened to segregate those without them.

The Government says secondary pupils should wear masks in class - but this is not mandatory. In the absence of firm rules, some schools have decided their own policies.

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Catmose College in Oakham, Rutland, has said that 'any student not wearing a face covering without the permission of the college will not be allowed to attend lessons'.

A school in Essex has reportedly said that children without masks will be told to eat their meals outside 'regardless of the weather'.

Others have said children will be turned away unless parents fill out a mask 'exemption form' for them.

Geoff Barton of heads' union ASCL, said: 'The guidance on face coverings is confused and unhelpful in that it says they are not mandatory but that their use must be implemented. We have asked the Government for clearer guidance.'

Boarding pupils concession

Boarding school pupils coming from abroad will no longer have to isolate in hotels following pressure from parents and head teachers.

Instead they will be allowed to quarantine at their school if they travel from the airport in pre-arranged private transport.

The children arriving from countries on the Government's red list to return to school in England had faced quarantining in a hotel for ten days, according to Department for Education guidance.

But the department now says the pupils can quarantine in 'physically self-contained' accommodation at the school.

The change to the rules came after the Boarding Schools Association wrote to the Government to warn that hotel quarantine arrangements pose 'a significant safeguarding risk' with minors isolated and alone in hotel rooms.



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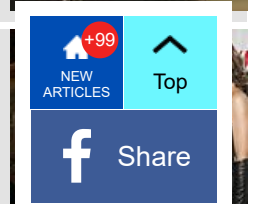
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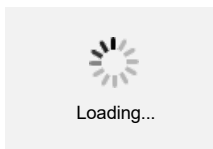
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The record executive, 69, did not hide his disgust at the prospect while appearing on Leah's Lemonade, where he was asked about the analogy.

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