

# Schools Infection Survey Update

May 2021

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## **What is the Schools Infection Survey?**

The Schools Infection Survey (SIS) is a flagship study taking place in 150 schools across 15 local authorities in England. The study is investigating the role of schools in the spread of COVID-19 and how transmission within and from schools can be minimised.

Over the 2020/21 school year, the study will:

- Measure the level of current COVID-19 infection
- Test for antibodies (evidence of past infection) to the virus and look at how this changes over time
- Track school absences and school closures
- Look at what changes schools have made to control the spread of the virus
- Investigate outbreaks in schools (when there are 2 or more infections)

The study collects 2 main types of information – some from tests and some from questionnaires.

The team take samples using two different types of test. A nose swab checks for a current COVID-19 infection, while a mouth swab checks for antibodies. Blood tests are taken from teachers. If antibodies are found, it means a person has already had a COVID-19 infection.

The questionnaires participants fill in give us lots of important information. Combining the questionnaires with the tests helps us get a clearer picture and understand the spread of the virus.

All the information we collect is anonymous and can't be linked to any individual or school.

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## **What do we do with the information?**

The study will help the UK Government make policy decisions about COVID-19 in schools. It also helps contribute to global scientific knowledge about the virus.

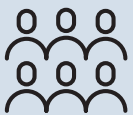
All this helps us to respond to the current pandemic and stay prepared for the future.



Staff prepare for a day of testing in Bournemouth



## What have we learned so far?



105 schools  
63 secondary, 42 primary



121 schools  
41 secondary, 80 primary



11,194 participants



12,203 participants



14 Local Authorities



15 Local Authorities

Findings from the first round focused on rates of current infection.

This first round of data showed COVID-19 infection rates among students was 1.24%, and staff 1.29%. This was roughly the same as levels found in the wider community at the peak of the second wave of the pandemic. The community level was 1.2% during the week 8 November to 14 November.

Staff and students had slightly higher rates of infection in secondary schools than in primary schools, but these differences were not significant.

Round 2 took place while schools were still open and looked at infection rates and antibody rates.

The results showed that staff and students had lower rates of COVID-19 infection than the community. School staff had similar levels of antibodies as other working-age adults.

There was no evidence in this preliminary analysis to show that participating school staff are at greater risk of infection than other working adults, although response rates were low.



“Schools and their staff have made a huge effort to protect themselves and their students by implementing COVID-19 control measures to try and stop infection entering the school site, and reduce on-site transmission.

These preliminary findings suggest participating school staff were not at significantly higher risk of infection than working age adults in the wider community.”

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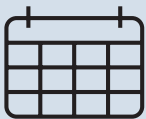
## Professor Sinéad Langan

**Co-chief investigator of the study at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine**

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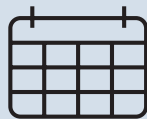
### What's next?

Round 5



4 - 21 May

Round 6



14 Jun - 02 Jul

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### Questionnaires

After each round of testing participants receive questionnaires to fill in.

It is important for the researchers to have this information alongside the test data. We would like to thank you for taking the time to fill out these questionnaires – they help us make important findings.

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### Sharing results

The next official publication of the study results will be on 27 May, with a detailed bulletin from the Office of National Statistics.

A Head Teachers' Forum and Local Authority Forum will be held on Microsoft Teams and presented by one of the study's lead scientists.

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### A note on vaccines and antibodies

Our antibody tests can identify people who have had a natural COVID-19 infection. If you've received a COVID-19 vaccination, your body will produce antibodies against the virus, but these won't be detected by our tests.

So, even if you have received the COVID-19 vaccine, it is beneficial for you to remain in the study. Your participation means that we can continue to track who has had a natural infection and who has not. It will also allow us to assess if infection occurs despite vaccination.