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HSE - Health Protection Surveillance Centre

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Deputy Jennifer Carroll MacNeill

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PQ Ref: 28431: To ask the Minister for Health the average number of contacts traced in relation to confirmed Covid-19 cases in schools.

Dear Deputy Carroll MacNeill,

Routine data are collected on confirmed cases of Covid-19 and are reported on as part of national data, as per HPSC. For close contacts identified through the education setting, the HSE has a bespoke school testing pathway, and all tests going through this pathway allow close contact positivity to be routinely interrogated. *Data presented for Tables 1,2 and 3 are as of 0930 on 16.11.20.*

Table 1 below outlines the overall activity to date through the schools testing pathway, for all educational facilities including child care facilities, primary, post-primary and special educational needs settings.

Table 1: Overall activity to date through the schools testing pathway

Summary	Cumulative Testing YTD
Number Tested	23,779
Number of Detected Cases	712
Detection Rate %	3.0%
Detected 0-17	595
Detected 18+	117
No. of Facilities Tested	935
Facilities with Detected Case	246

With regard to school facilities only, the breakdown can be seen as per table 2. This identifies that 731 facilities required a public health risk assessment and the further testing of close contacts. There are approximately 4000 schools nationally, and this therefore equates to approximately 18% of all schools.

Table 2: Facility type, close contacts and testing positivity, through the schools testing pathway

Facility Type	No. Facilities	No. Tested	No. Detected	Detected %	No. Not Detected
Post Primary	235	5712	116	2.0%	5,573
Primary	452	12,397	337	2.7%	11,911
Special Education	44	1,155	39	3.4%	1,115
Total	731	19,264	492	2.5%	18,599

*The table above includes resulted tests only and does not include tests that are in progress with labs/invalid samples.

In total 19,264 close contacts have been identified from across these 731 settings, therefore approximately 26 close contacts per facility, identified and tested. It is important to note that some facilities will have had contact tracing with regard to more than 1 confirmed case, and also that the actual numbers contact traced will vary significantly from case to case. Someone will have required large exclusions of classes, friends and bus contacts; others very few if any. But the numbers tested reflect the actual number of close contacts identified following PHRA for a confirmed case that was in the educational facility within their infectious time period (48 hours before symptoms begin, or 24 hours before the Covid-19 test for those who are symptomatic).

As per table 3 below; amongst all tested through this pathway 86.9% tested are students, the positivity of identified close contacts is 2.7% amongst primary students; 2.0% amongst post-primary students; 3.6% amongst SEN students. The remaining 13.1% tested are adults, with a positivity of identified close contacts of 2.6% amongst the primary staff; 2.3% amongst post-primary staff and 3.0% amongst SEN staff.

Comparison with close contacts nationally

Nationally the positivity of testing for close contacts in the community is approximately 10%.

Close contact positivity by sector and staff/students.

Table three identifies the close contact testing positivity by staff/student across the different educational sectors.

Table 3: Testing by adults and staff, across different educational sectors, through the schools testing pathway

School Type	Age	Tested	Tested %	Detected	Detected %	Not Detected
Post Primary	0-17	4,944	26%	98	2.0%	4,823
	>18	768	4%	18	2.3%	750
Primary	0-17	11,078	58%	303	2.7%	10,678
	>18	1,319	7%	34	2.6%	1,233
Special Education	0-17	658	3%	24	3.6%	633
	>18	497	3%	15	3.0%	482
Total		19,264	100%	492	2.6%	18,599

* The table above includes resulted tests only and does not include tests that are in progress with labs/invalid samples.

I trust this answer your query.

Yours sincerely,

PP 

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