

**9<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

Deputy Patrick Costello  
Dáil Éireann  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

**Re: PQ 26019/20/20**

**Question: “To ask the Minister for Health the priority level provided to Covid-19 tests from teachers”.**

Dear Deputy Costello,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

We understand the importance of an appropriate clinical response and fast turnaround within the Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) services and indeed across all testing of children, younger people and those working with these groups. To support this sector and all other sectors, we continue to prioritise reducing our end to end turnaround time of all testing completed for COVID-19. The current end to end turnaround time within the community is a median of 1.95 days from the point of referral to result communicated and over 93% of results are communicated within the target 3-day turnaround.

I wish to advise that when a case of Covid-19 is identified which is linked to an educational facility, Public Health professionals discuss directly with the person, or family as appropriate, and asks them about their contacts. The Public Health professionals will also discuss the matter directly with the educational facility, undertaking a public health risk assessment. Recommended measures, including any exclusion of other pupils or staff members, are made at this point. The responses and recommendations for each educational facility may well differ, depending on the circumstances identified by Public Health.

Pupils and students, who have been identified as a close contact of a detected case will be organised by and managed by Public Health and do not need to contact their GP for an individual test referral. I have also included the links to the Schools Pathway for Covid-19 document, Infection Prevention and Control guidance for Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings during the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Covid-19 Assessment and Decision Making Pathway for all children aged 3 months until completion of primary school, as well as the HPSC guidance in educational settings as additional information for your attention.

To date Public Health identified 304 educational facilities where mass testing has been required. This has included 68 childcare facilities. Testing of 7,175 staff and students has been completed. Overall, for this testing the median turnaround time has been 25 hrs from the point at which swabs were taken to the communication of result. There have been 125 detected cases, which is a positivity rate of 1.7%, identified across 47 schools confirming 20 individuals are over 18 and the remaining 105 are under 18. Please see below the number of educational facilities broken down by Public Health Department:

PH Department	No. of Facilities	%
East	182	60
Midlands	21	7
Mid-West	17	6
North East	25	8
North West	15	5
South	17	6
South-East	8	3
West	19	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>100</b>

We have undertaken testing in childcare, primary, post primary and special education facilities where a total of 7,175 staff and students have been tested. Of all those tested, 14% (1,010) are aged over 18 and the remaining 86% (6,165) are under 18. The results of these tests are presented in the below table;

Facility Type	No. facilities	No. Tested	No. Detected	No. Not detected	No. Pending	No. not tested/invalid
<b>Childcare Facility</b>	68	1,279	35	1,212	32	0
<b>Post Primary</b>	73	1,623	21	1,506	94	2
<b>Primary</b>	151	3,793	59	3,542	188	4
<b>Special Education</b>	12	480	10	468	1	1
	<b>304</b>	<b>7,175</b>	<b>125 (1.7%)</b>	<b>6,728</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>7</b>

I trust this clarifies the issue you have raised.

Yours sincerely,

*Niamh O'Beirne*

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**Niamh O'Beirne**  
**National Lead for Testing and Tracing**