



8th September 2021

Deputy Réada Cronin
Dáil Éireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

PQ 43280/21 “To ask the Minister for Health if schoolchildren tested in walk-in centres as opposed to school contact tracing in which some parents are reporting in excess of 72 hour wait times and wish to proceed with testing on their own, will if they are positive be deemed community transmission or school transmission; and if they are deemed positive due to community transmission, if he will amend the classification in the interest of clarity regarding school transmission and virus presence; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

Dear Deputy Cronin,

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

The HSE advise parents that they should wait to be informed if their child has been identified for inclusion in class testing and not independently book a test appointment. It is more efficient for school close contact reporting to wait for confirmation of the class testing. If parents do not wait and attend independently, the results cannot be connected back to the class. If a pupil has been notified of being a close contact waiting for the class testing does not impact their restricting movement's period. It remains to be 10 days after a not detected result.

We are dealing with significantly high volumes of testing this week so our class booking is taking somewhat longer. To deal with any delays we have put additional administrative supports in place to assist Public Health. I wish to advise it will return to a booking within 24 hours shortly, but the main priority should be for the child to be identified as a close contact and restrict their movements.

Prior to schools returning there were approximately 4,000 cases per week in 0-18 year olds, many of these children will now have also been in an educational facility and hence a high impact on the schools testing processes. We have had requests for over 2,000 primary/early year group testing exercises and over 1,000 secondary schools “circle of friends” testing exercises since the beginning of the academic year. It is important to note those fully vaccinated close contacts specifically children aged over 12 years, who do not have symptoms, do not need to present for testing or restrict their movements. They can attend education facilities as normal. We continue to keep a close eye on the testing numbers and all issues arising from this increased demand to ensure additional measures are put in place and appropriate actions are taken as necessary.

I trust this addresses your question.

Yours sincerely,

Niamh O'Beirne
National Lead Testing and Tracing

