

14th May 2021

Dear parents and carers,

We'd like to start by thanking you for your efforts and the sacrifices you have made to help combat COVID-19. The relaxation of certain restrictions from May 17th, when new guidance will come into effect is welcome. This updated guidance can be found [here](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do).
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Your cooperation and support has been really important in reducing the number of cases. This has allowed the most recent relaxation of restrictions. Yet, we all need to be cautious so that we can continue to keep cases low. This includes our community of schools, and the families they serve, right across Gateshead.

The Department for Education has released updated guidance for schools which can be found [here](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/985138/10_May_Schools_Guidance.pdf).
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Our schools have done a tremendous job. They have kept children safe and minimised disruption. We have asked schools to continue to do what they are doing to keep everyone safe. We want to make sure that we continue to do everything we can to reduce the likelihood of children having to self-isolate.

This means there will be very few changes to the procedures schools have in place. They will continue to have increased hygiene and cleaning procedures in place. They will keep their revised arrangements for the start and end of the school day. In school, your children will only have contact with those in their bubbles, class or year group.

We all want school life to return to normal as soon as it is safely possible. However now is not the time for relaxation. We do not want to risk increases in positive cases or children having to self-isolate for 10 days.

We will continue to work with Headteachers and check the situation closely. This will help us to make the right decisions for schools when the next relaxation milestone arrives on 21st June.

Once again, we thank you for your support. We hope that the restrictions on schools can be relaxed as more of the adult population are vaccinated. The vaccination roll out in Gateshead has been a resounding success.

We encourage you to be vaccinated as soon as you can. This will help reduce the risk for all of us.

Yours sincerely



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