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Dear parent or carer,

COVID-19 update

Thank you for continuing to do all you can to protect each other this summer. We hope that you and your family have had an enjoyable break.

Like us, I'm sure you're keen that your children remain in school this academic year and we want to remind you of the ways you can help this happen:

- Cases of COVID-19 **remain high in our county** - the virus has not gone away. Remember, it remains a legal requirement that anyone who **tests positive** or has symptoms of COVID-19 **stays at home and gets a PCR test**.
- Young people under 18 years and six months who have been identified as a close contact will continue to attend school –including if someone in their household has COVID-19 - provided they are symptom free. However, they should still get **a PCR test** and limit socialising until they know the results. This will help keep loved ones and the wider community safe.
- Regular rapid testing for people with no symptoms will remain very important to helping prevent the spread of COVID-19. Secondary school pupils are encouraged to **continue twice-weekly testing**, with secondary schools being advised to offer pupils on-site lateral flow device (LFD) tests before they return to face- to-face teaching.
- Vaccines remain the best way to protect people from coronavirus and we would urge parents of **students aged 16 and 17, as well as younger children aged 12-15 in certain eligible groups** to support the offer of the vaccine. For further information visit: [https:// COVID-1919.glos.nhs.uk/](https://COVID-1919.glos.nhs.uk/)

- It is also recommended that face coverings are worn in busy and enclosed areas including on public or school transport.

So whilst some measures have relaxed we can all still work together to ensure our children get the education they deserve this academic year by limiting the spread of COVID-19 in schools.

What will schools be responsible for?

With our support, schools have been busy preparing for pupils' return, their priority being to make sure all pupils can access face-to-face, high-quality education in the safest possible way.

- Schools have reviewed their risk assessments in line with national guidance. It's important to remember that the risk assessment process will vary from school to school and will depend on a number of factors such as whether a school is currently experiencing an outbreak, case rates in their community, on-site facilities, the size and layout of the school site and staffing levels.
- Schools will no longer be responsible for tracing close contacts of pupils who test positive for COVID-19 - this will be done by NHS Test and Trace – but in some circumstances will be asked to support the process.
- Whilst restrictions such as bubbles have been eased to allow a full return to school activities, handwashing and regular cleaning across school buildings will still feature as part school life

In the event of a school outbreak extra action might be considered when cases reach a threshold, which could include face coverings in communal areas and classrooms for secondary school pupils; moving group activities outdoors or enhanced ventilation and deep cleaning.

Schools will continue to work with us to agree what action should be taken and we ask that you support your school and the difficult decisions they have to make.

Advice and information for parents and carers about returning to school can be found at: [gov.uk/backtoschool](https://www.gov.uk/backtoschool) or via this blog: <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2021/08/24/back-to-school-what-you-need-to-know>

For information and advice on the steps you help prevent the spread of COVID-19 visit: [https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/ COVID-19-information-and-advice/](https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/COVID-19-information-and-advice/)

Thank you again for your ongoing support and we wish you and your child every happiness and success this academic year.

Yours sincerely



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Executive Director
of Adult Social Care and Public Health



Chris Spencer
Director of Children's Services