

The Minister of StateSAXON STATE MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND EDUCATION
Postfach 10 09 10 | 01079 Dresden

To all parents
of students
at public schools
in the Free State of Saxony

Dresden, 28 August 2020

Cc:

To all parents
of students
at independent schools

Dear Sir/Madam, dear parents

The summer holidays are over – and a new school year is beginning. The 2020/2021 school year will be one of particular challenges. I would like to give you an overview of what school operations in a pandemic setting mean for you and your children.

You know how important school is. School is a place of living and learning for your children, where they can come into contact with others, meet friends, learn, and develop social skills. Children need a daily routine and normality. They have a right to education, a right to the best possible transfer of knowledge and skill development, and they need their friends. I am convinced the only way to totally guarantee this is through daily lessons at school.

Even before the summer holidays, I announced that all students would attend their classes as per the applicable timetables and syllabuses five days a week. Our aim is to make lessons as normal as possible, and to limit student restrictions only to what is absolutely necessary. In the event of a spike in infections, school closures must be the very last resort.

School attendance is generally compulsory. Student exemptions from attending classes in person due to a significant health risk must be proven by a medical certificate and presented to the school. The affected students will then be given a home-learning programme.

The resumption of regular lessons at all schools across the Free State of Saxony continues to require compliance with the already very well engrained hygiene measures. Your school will gladly advise you of its hygiene policy, which is based on the hygiene framework plan.



Street address:

**Sächsisches Staatsministerium für
Kultur**Carolaplatz 1
01097 Dresden
www.smk.sachsen.de**Transport access:**

Accessible via tram lines 3, 7, 8

For information on access for electronically signed and encrypted electronic documents, please visit www.smk.sachsen.de/kontakt.htm

I would just like to take this opportunity to mention the following important rules:

- No persons proven to have been infected with SARS-CoV-2 or displaying relevant symptoms (cough, fever, diarrhoea, vomiting) are permitted to enter the school.
- If students display symptoms indicative of SARS-CoV-2 for more than two consecutive days, they are only permitted to attend school two days after the last day of their symptoms.
- Anyone entering the school must immediately wash or disinfect their hands thoroughly.
- Classrooms and frequently used rooms must be ventilated multiple times a day.

Students taking public transport, and therefore also the school bus, are required to wear a mouth and nose covering. The respective principals will establish rules as to when mouth and nose coverings need to be worn in school buildings or on school grounds. Proper teaching requires good communication, facial feedback and total concentration. This becomes difficult when wearing a mouth and nose covering for several hours a day. As such, students and teachers need only wear such masks during class on a voluntary basis or for very personal reasons.

Principals and their teaching staff have worked hard to prepare for the 2020/2021 school year. In addition to their many other challenging tasks, they are responsible for making decisions on how schools should be operated during this time of coronavirus. Varying staffing and spatial factors mean a number of things can only be established in detail on site. Please rest assured that this will be done in your children's interests.

Keeping a distance of 1.5 m between people is not possible in the average classroom. I can understand that some parents, students and teachers find this scenario unsettling or very concerning. Studies conducted by Dresden's and Leipzig's university hospitals have each independently found that, in Saxony, schools did not become hotspots before lockdown or after reopening, and that children are not as susceptible to infection. This continues to be investigated. I would like to assure you that we will be maintaining a very close eye on infection trends, as well as scientific findings, and will keep weighing things up responsibly and with great consideration.

While infection numbers are currently very low, it is impossible, even in Saxony, to know what will happen over the coming months. We need to be ready for a resurgence in infections – including at schools. The individual measures taken to protect the population from infection are generally determined by the local health authorities of the administrative districts or independent municipalities. Regardless of the general case numbers, the health authorities will decide whether or not to close schools and day-care centres for 14 days if infections are clustered at one particular institution/neighbouring institutions (local hotspot).

Teachers have been prepared, right from the outset, for cases requiring limitation of in-class attendance or even local school closures.

The State Ministry of Culture and Education, together with the State Office for Schooling and Education, has boosted Saxony's central digital services, and will continue to develop these. Additional educational content, such as digital worksheets, interactive films, lesson-preparation materials, has also been provided. We have expanded the range of information, advanced training and support available for digital lessons – including distance learning –, and will keep developing this.

Dear parents

I am aware there are great concerns among many students, teachers and you, the parents, regarding the education pathway as we look ahead. The success of home learning was – for all kinds of reasons – very patchy, and could not replace in-classroom teaching. Not all course content could thus be fully covered during the last semester. To prepare for the new school year, all schools have recorded each individual student's learning progress in the specific subjects. The teachers will adjust material distribution accordingly this school year, so as to catch up on the relevant course content. For now, it is compulsory subjects and courses that are being given top priority at schools, and I ask for your understanding in this matter.

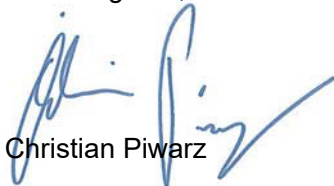
Detailed and further information on specific questions is available on our website at www.bildung.sachsen.de/blog. If you can't find an answer to your question there, please contact the State Ministry of Culture and Education or the State Office for Schooling and Education. Your school should be your first port of call for highly specific questions.

The 2020/2021 school year will be one of particular challenges, but I ask you to trust in the educational skills and instincts of our teachers.

Our children always need our attention and care. In an age of coronavirus, that also requires all of us to comply with the general hygiene rules. Let's reduce unnecessary and, in particular, frivolous social contact. Keep your distance, so our children don't have to.

I wish you, your family and, especially, our students a good start to what will hopefully be a successful school year!

Kind regards,



Christian Piwarz