

Translation Parent Letter from the Saxon Minister of Education Mr Piwarz

August 28, 2020

Dear Sir or Madam,

the summer vacations are over - a new school year begins. The school year 2020/2021 will be accompanied by special challenges. I would like to give you an overview of what school operations under pandemic conditions mean for you and your children.

You know how important school is. School is a place of learning and living for your children, where they come into contact with others, meet friends, learn and develop social skills. Children and young people need daily structure and normality. They have the right to education, the right to the best possible knowledge transfer and competence development and they need their friends. I am convinced that this can only be fully guaranteed by daily lessons at school.

Even before the summer vacations, I announced that all students would be taught in their classes and courses according to the applicable timetables and curricula five days a week. Our goal is to make the lessons as normal as possible and to limit the restrictions for the students to the absolute necessary. School closures can only be the very last measure in case of an aggravation of the infection - only the last resort.

In principle, **school attendance is compulsory**. An exemption of students from attendance classes due to a considerable health risk must be proven by a medical certificate and presented to the school. The affected students will then receive an offer for home study time.

The resumption of regular classes at all schools in the Free State of Saxony still requires that the already well practiced hygiene measures are adhered to. Your school will gladly inform you about the framework hygiene plan. At this point I would just like to point out the following important regulations:

- **The school may not be entered by persons who are demonstrably infected with SARSCoV-2 or who show symptoms (cough, fever, diarrhoea, vomiting) that indicate this.**
- **If students show symptoms indicative of SARS-CoV-2 on more than two consecutive days, entry is only permitted two days after the last occurrence of the symptoms.**
- **Anyone entering the school must immediately wash or disinfect their hands thoroughly.**
- **Classrooms and regularly used rooms must be ventilated several times a day.**

Students are required to wear a mouth-and-nose cover on public transport and thus on the school bus. The head teacher determines in the framework of his or her house rules in which situations a mouth-nose cover is to be worn in the school building or on the school grounds. Good teaching requires good communication, mimic feedback and full concentration. With a mouth-nose cover for several hours a day this becomes very difficult. **Therefore, students and teachers wear such a protective mask during lessons only voluntarily and for very personal reasons.**

The principals, together with their teaching staff, have prepared the school year 2020/2021 well. They are responsible - in addition to their varied and demanding tasks - for making decisions about the organization of school operations during the Corona period. Due to the different personnel and spatial conditions, many things in detail can only be sensibly arranged on site. Please be assured and trust that this will be done in the interest of your children.

In regular lessons the distance of 1.5 m in the classroom cannot be kept. I can understand that a part of the parents, students and teachers are worried or very concerned about this learning situation.

Studies of the Dresden and Leipzig university hospitals have independently proven in Saxony that schools have not developed into hotspots either before the lockdown or after reopening and that children participate little in the infection process. The studies will be continued. I would like to assure you that we will continue to keep a close eye on the development of the infection incidence as well as scientific findings. We will continue to make sensitive and responsible considerations in the future.

The infection figures are currently at a very low level, but even in the Free State of Saxony it is not possible to predict what will happen in the coming months. We must expect a renewed flare-up of infections - schools will not be exempt from this. In principle, the individual measures to protect the population against infection are decided by the local health authorities in the districts or the cities that are not part of a district. **Regardless of the general number of cases, the health authorities will decide on the 14-day closure of schools and day care if infections are concentrated at one facility or neighboring facilities (local hotspot).**

Teachers prepare themselves from the outset for the case of necessary restrictions on attendance classes or even for necessary local school closures. Together with the State Office for School and Education, the State Ministry of Education has strengthened the central digital services of the Free State of Saxony and will continue to develop them further. Additional educational content, such as digital worksheets, interactive films and materials for class preparation have been made available. We have expanded and will continue to develop the information, training and support services for digital teaching - also at a distance.

Dear Parents,

I am aware that many students, teachers and parents are concerned about their future education. Learning at home was successful - for a variety of reasons - in very different ways and could not replace classroom instruction. As a result, not all learning content could be fully covered in the last half of the school year. In preparation for the new school year, the individual learning levels in the individual subjects were recorded in all schools. Teachers will adjust the distribution of material in this school year accordingly in order to catch up on the relevant learning content. I ask for your understanding that compulsory subjects and compulsory education in school life will have the highest priority for the time being.

Detailed and further information on detailed questions is available on our website at www.bildung.sachsen.de/blog. If you do not find answers to your questions here, please continue to contact the State Ministry of Culture or the State Office for School and Education. Your school is the first point of contact for specific questions.

The school year 2020/2021 will be accompanied by special challenges. I would ask you to trust the pedagogical skills and tact of our teachers.

Our children always need our care and attention. In the Corona time, this also means for all of us: compliance with the general rules of hygiene. Let us reduce unnecessary and above all frivolous social contacts. Please keep your distance so that our children can deviate from this.

I wish you, your family and above all our students a good start and a successful school year!

Kind regards,

Christian Piwarz

