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To all schools in  
Rhineland-Palatinate

**THE MINISTER**

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Dear parents, dear guardians,

Last Wednesday, the Presidents of the federal states discussed the current Corona situation with the Chancellor. They have extended the “lockdown light” and adopted additional measures. But they have also stressed once again the importance of education. And that is what I want to do too: early childhood and school education are invaluable to our society. That is why we must do everything we can to ensure that our children and young people can attend their kindergartens and schools as much as possible during the pandemic. This is another reason why society restricts itself in many other ways: to ensure that schools and kindergartens can remain open and to ensure that lessons can take place in the best possible way.

**Classroom instruction is still the first means of choice.** Our students need their teachers and to be addressed by them as a learning and life companion. This is also the view of the German Academy for Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, which is currently in favour of keeping schools open. Studies from Hamburg, Saxony and Baden-Württemberg, as well as data from the Rhineland-Palatinate State Bureau of Investigation, also show that schools are not the driving force behind the pandemic. Infections are generally carried into schools from outside, and the risk of infection within schools is significantly lower than in the home environment. This is largely due to the fact that our schools are implementing the hygiene rules excellently and our students are complying very well with them.

School is currently running under Corona conditions. Everyday school life is completely different from what it was a year ago. Certain teaching formats have been suspended



for the time being, and music and physical education are severely restricted. This is regrettable, but it is much more important that school takes place every day because we know how essential it is for our students. Their education and their future opportunities are on the line. That is why we have taken appropriate protective measures: we have already introduced a mask requirement in all secondary schools from the fifth grade onwards and our schools have been equipped with reserve masks. Primary and secondary school staff have also been provided with Face Shields masks. FFP2 masks for emergency situations in schools have also been delivered in recent days. The obligation to wear masks in particular has had a very positive effect, so our experts tell us. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your children for your cooperation.

Against this background, on Wednesday the Presidents and the Chancellor decided the following regulations for the schools, which will be implemented in Rhineland-Palatinate as follows:

- 1. In principle, all pupils should participate in classroom lessons as far as possible.**
- 2. The initially temporary regulations for primary schools, such as the formation of fixed learning groups, will continue to apply until the end of the first half of the year.**
- 3. In the current situation, it is still compulsory for pupils from grade 5 and above, as well as for teachers throughout Rhineland-Palatinate, to wear masks in the classroom in secondary schools.** Mask breaks, especially for drinking or eating, are to be made possible, whereby the distance requirement must be adhered to.
- 4. In special situations, schools may switch from face-to-face teaching to an alternating programme (presence/distance teaching) for a limited period of time, in coordination with the school supervisor.** This possibility exists from Year 8 upwards in districts and independent towns with an incidence of more than 200 new infections per 100,000 inhabitants per week, provided that this is necessary in view of the general infection situation and the situation at the respective school. The focus will also continue to be on the older students. Where necessary, learning spaces will be provided in schools for pupils who lack the necessary technical equipment or learning environment at home due to spatial and other circumstances.



**Face-to-face teaching must continue long-term for:**

- Pupils up to and including Year 7,
- Pupils in BVJ and BF 1,
- Final classes in vocational school training courses and Year 12 in the G8-GTS grammar schools and Year 13 in the G9 grammar schools and integrated comprehensive schools.

**5. Protective measures of the Gesundheitsamt (quarantine or isolation) remain unaffected.**

We have also urged our schools to consider a staggered start to teaching. This would further distort public and school transport. However, this can only be done if the parents and the school community agree, so again you are requested to respond to the corresponding concerns of your school sympathetically. The State of Rhineland-Palatinate has created the framework conditions for this, in which the Ministry of Transport has provided 250 additional buses for school transport and extended the school bus programme until Easter 2021.

Dear parents, dear guardians,

The past weeks and months have been an act of strength for all of us. And for families in particular, 2020 has been and still is a year that has been associated with many concerns. Concerns that haven't diminished with the approaching family celebrations at Christmas. Nevertheless, the good news coming from Mainz, where the Rhineland-Palatinate company BioNTech has developed what is probably the world's first Corona vaccine, gives us hope for the coming year. Even if the pandemic will accompany us for a few more months: if we can get through this winter, we can look to the future with optimism. That is why I would ask you to keep going, reduce your contact with others and also observe the rules in force on Christmas and New Year's Eve. Because how we all behave during the holiday season will be decisive for what happens in our schools during the three winter months thereafter. Let us do everything we can together to ensure that classroom lessons can be held for all students.

Thank you and your children very much for your great commitment at this difficult time.



Stay healthy!

Sincerely,

Dr Stefanie Hubig