



ELECTRONIC LETTER

To the parents
and guardians
of all pupils
at schools in Rhineland-Palatinate

THE MINISTER

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Dear parents, dear guardians,

After the conference between the Chancellor and the State Premiers on 19 January 2021, we would like to inform you in good time about the next steps in our schools.

For some days, we have been seeing the number of new infections falling in Rhineland-Palatinate; on 18 January 2021, the incidence was 106 (reported infections in the last 7 days per 100,000 people), on 21 December 2020 it was 170. But we agree: The situation is not yet satisfactory. The virus mutations have raised further questions, combined with concerns that the mutated virus will spread faster.

That is why the Ministerial Conference of the Federal States decided, together with the Chancellor, that the lockdown must continue until 14 February 2021 and we must all continue to do everything we can to get through the next few weeks with reduced contacts and discipline. We want to make sure that the positive trend in the number of infections continues. Therefore, we must extend distance learning until 14 February 2021. However, the joint decision of the State Premiers and the Chancellor allows us to enable the youngest in the system as well as the final classes to study, at least temporarily, in divided classes under strict hygiene requirements. This is especially important for the younger pupils because the situation is most difficult for them. They, most of all, need support in their learning—the close support and guidance of their teachers. At the same time, for you, the parents and guardians, the need for care is highest for this group.



I am incredibly grateful that over the past few days we have been able to hold various discussions with the chairs of staff councils, school administrators, representatives of the state parents' council and the state pupil council and advise them on the next steps.

For schools this means:

- Pupils in grades 1 to 4 will continue to have distance learning in January. The beginning of alternating classes, which we wanted to start on 25 January 2021, has to be postponed by one week to 1 February 2021. In accordance with the joint resolution of the Ministerial Conference of the Federal States with the Chancellor, the compulsory presence for pupils remains suspended.
- In primary schools and special schools, the mask requirement continues to apply during lessons. This does not apply to pupils in special needs schools who, due to their disabilities, cannot wear or tolerate a mask. The mask requirement is implemented according to the educational requirements and the age of the children. Attention is paid to regular mask breaks.
- For pupils in grades 5 to 13, distance learning will continue until 14 February 2021.
- Emergency care options remain as before.
- The special regulations continue to apply to pupils who are facing final exams; they can be taught face-to-face in compliance with distance and other hygiene rules.
- From 15 February 2021, we want to return to alternating classes for all age groups—if the infection rate and further developments allow. The Ministerial Conference of the Federal States will also discuss the question of what happens after 14 February 2021, together with the Chancellor.

Dear parents, dear guardians,

I can well imagine that you and your children would have wished for a faster start of face-to-face teaching. Many children have already been looking forward to seeing their



friends and teachers again at school. For you, too, the great challenge of reconciling family and work under Corona conditions will continue for a while.

These times demand a great deal from us all, but above all children and young people suffer from the situation. And even if distance learning is working much better everywhere than during the first lockdown—and often works very well—it cannot replace being taught together in a class or a course. I therefore hope that everyone in this state will contribute to further containing the infection process by consistently adhering to the rules. As difficult as it may be, we must all make another joint effort—so that we can soon return to more normalcy.

Thank you very much for your understanding, I wish you and your families all the best.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Stefanie Hubig