

# **Corona Hygiene Concept for Schools in Rhineland-Palatinate**

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## I. Preliminary Remarks

According to § 36, in connection with § 33 of the Infection Protection Act (Infektionsschutzgesetz – IfSG), all schools must have a school hygiene concept in place, in which the most important cornerstones of the Infection Protection Act are regulated, in order to contribute to the health of the pupils and all those involved in school life by providing a hygienic environment.

This Corona Hygiene Concept serves as a supplement to the model hygiene concept and must be implemented in accordance with the Corona Control Ordinance in its currently valid version. There will be supplementary guidelines issued on special topics such as sports and music lessons.

School management and teachers must set a good example and at the same time ensure that pupils take the hygiene instructions seriously and implement them.

All employees of the schools, the school authorities, all pupils and all other persons regularly working at schools are also required to carefully observe the hygiene instructions issued by the health authorities and the Robert Koch Institute.

Staff, pupils and legal guardians are to be informed about the hygiene measures in an appropriate manner.

## II. Resumption of Regular Operations

In the dichotomy between the right to education and state care for children and adolescents and their families on the one hand, and measures to protect against the spread of coronavirus on the other hand, infection control had to be given priority, which was implemented by closing schools. Taking into account the current infection situation and the above-mentioned objectives, the resumption of regular operations in schools at the beginning of the school year 2020/21 is possible and necessary.

It should be noted that essential hygiene and infection protection measures must continue to be observed by all persons involved in school life. In addition, it is important to recognize emerging chains of infection at an early stage and to prevent their spread.

## 1. HYGIENE MEASURES

Persons who

- are infected with corona virus or show symptoms compatible with COVID-19,\*
- have had contact with an infected person within the last 14 days, or
- are subject to other quarantine measures

shall not enter the facility.

If symptoms occur during teaching hours, the pupils concerned must be isolated and their parents informed. In addition, in this case, the date, the name of the child as well as an classification of the illness into the categories "cold symptoms", "abdominal pain/nausea", "general pain", and/or "other" must be noted, kept securely with the headmaster and destroyed after four weeks.

The following applies:

Pupils who have a simple infection without significant impairment of their general condition or with only slight symptoms (e.g. only a cold, slight cough, sore throat) or who have a history of known symptoms (e.g. hay fever, pollen allergy) do not currently need to be excluded from school (see also the leaflet "Dealing with cold/disease symptoms in children and adolescents in kindergartens and schools" published by the Ministry for Social Affairs, Labour, Health and Demography).

\* RKI: Demografische Daten und Symptome/Manifestationen COVID-19-Erkrankter in Deutschland (Stand 11.08.2020), (z.B. Husten, Fieber, Störungen des Geruchs-/Geschmackssinns, Atemnot, Kopf- und Gliederschmerzen, Appetitlosigkeit, Gewichtsverlust, Übelkeit, Bauchschmerzen, Erbrechen, Durchfall);  
[https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges\\_Coronavirus/Steckbrief.html#doc13776792bodyText3](https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges_Coronavirus/Steckbrief.html#doc13776792bodyText3)

\*\* <https://corona.rlp.de/de/themen/schulen-kitas/dokumente-schule/>

## (a) Personal Hygiene

The following hygiene and protective measures must be observed:

- Keep your distance, unless exceptions are provided for in this hygiene concept.
- Refrain from physical contact (hugs, handshakes, personal contact), unless the physical contact is absolutely necessary for teaching, pedagogical or health purposes such as first aid measures.
- Adherence to the coughing and sneezing etiquette.
- Thorough hand hygiene in accordance with the relevant rules (washing or disinfecting hands). Practicing how to use hand disinfectants should be appropriate to the children's age. The respective manufacturer's instructions for use must be observed.
- Wearing a mouth-nose cover (MNC):

is mandatory for all persons on the school premises (teachers and other school personnel, pupils, external persons). This obligation includes all rooms and areas inside the school building (classrooms and subject rooms, corridors, corridors and staircases, during breaks, in the cafeteria, in the administration area) and on outdoor school premises. The hygiene rules on how to wear the MNC properly must be observed and practiced. \*

Exceptions:

aa) Pupils,

- as soon as they have reached their seat in the classroom,
- if this is necessary for pedagogical-didactic reasons and is permitted by the supervising teacher,
- if they stay exclusively within their class or course on outside school premises.

\* <https://www.infektionsschutz.de/coronavirus/alltag-in-zeiten-von-corona/alltagsmaske-tragen.html>

ab) Teachers and other staff,

- as soon as they have reached their respective workplace (e.g. in the classroom, with an appropriate distance from the pupils; provided that a distance of at least 1.5 m is maintained).

ac) All persons,

- as far as this is necessary for the intake of food (while maintaining a distance of at least 1.5 m).
- for whom it is not possible or unreasonable to wear a MNC due to a disability or for health reasons. This must be proven by a medical certificate.
- for whom it is necessary to remove the MNC for communicating with people with a hearing or visual impairment or for other compelling reasons.

External persons (e.g. parents), provided they are seated in an assigned seat and the distance of at least 1.5 m is maintained.

b) Room Hygiene

The measures do not only apply to classrooms, but to all rooms. For example, organizational measures must also be taken for teachers' rooms, secretariats or meeting rooms to ensure the best possible implementation of hygiene rules.

- **Ventilation:** Intensive ventilation of the rooms must be ensured. At least every 20 minutes, the rooms must be ventilated or cross-ventilated through fully open windows for several minutes, even during lessons. Ventilation by tilting windows is largely ineffective, since it hardly exchanges any air. However, opening restrictions for pivoting sash windows must be observed due to the high risk of accidents. Fully opened windows must be supervised because of the associated risk of accidents. The duty of care and supervision in schools must be upheld. \*

If windows in a room cannot be opened permanently due to structural conditions, it is not suitable for teaching unless an effective ventilation system is in place.

\* Aufsicht in Schulen: Verwaltungsvorschrift des Ministeriums für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Weiterbildung vom 4. Juni 1999 (1546 A - Tgb. Nr. 192/98); <https://bildung.ukrlp.de/?id=519>

- Cleaning: DIN 77400 (Cleaning Services for School Buildings – Cleaning Requirements) must be observed. In addition to this, the following applies: Even if the infectivity of corona viruses on inanimate surfaces decreases rapidly depending on material and environmental conditions such as temperature and humidity, the following areas should be cleaned particularly thoroughly and, in highly frequented areas, several times a day if necessary:
  - Door handles and grips (e.g. on drawer and window handles), handles of doors, stairs & handrails, light switches, tables, chairs, telephones, copying machines
  - Computer mice and keyboards

Even in the current COVID pandemic, routine surface disinfection in schools is **not** recommended by the RKI (Robert Koch Institute). Adequate cleaning is completely sufficient.

(c) hygiene in the sanitary area

- Provide sufficient liquid soap dispensers and disposable towels and refill regularly. Cloth towel rolls from retractile dispenser systems are also suitable.
- Provide a collection container for disposable towels.
- At least daily cleaning of the sanitary area.

## **2. MINIMUM DISTANCE AND GROUP SIZES**

In principle, the minimum distance of 1.50 m applies to all persons staying on the school premises.

Students may only deviate from this distance if it is absolutely necessary for the regular classes and courses. Even then the maximum possible distance must be observed.

The minimum distance between students and teachers and other staff must always be observed, unless there are compelling pedagogical-didactic reasons for not doing so.

Fixed seating arrangements must be observed in classrooms and course rooms. Frontal seating arrangements are to be preferred.

A mixing of the learning groups should be refrained from if this is not absolutely necessary for reasons of school organization (e.g. course system, cross-class religious/ethical instruction). If students from different classes come together in a learning group, then students from their classes should be seated together in partial groups. This must be documented (e.g. by means of a seating plan in the class register).

As far as this is possible for the school organization, staggered break times and the allocation of zones for fixed groups on the playground are recommended.

Fixed seating arrangements must also be observed at conferences, meetings with parents or similar events.

Routing with floor markings and/or signs in the school building and on the school grounds can help to ensure that students and teachers are guided in an orderly manner to the classrooms, break areas, the cafeteria and the administrative wing, thus avoiding crowds of people.

### **3. STAFF ASSIGNMENT**

In view of the current infection situation, there are no restrictions on the assignment of personnel. In principle, the entire staff has the opportunity to protect themselves in every situation by adhering to the above-mentioned hygiene and infection prevention measures as well as the regulations on minimum distances.

#### a) Persons with risk-increasing basic diseases

According to the Robert Koch Institute, a general allocation to a risk group is not possible. It requires an evaluation of the individual risk factors. Temporary exemption from attendance can be granted in individual cases upon request, upon presentation of a medical certificate proving membership of a risk group, if

- there is a suspected case of COVID-19 in the school, which has been confirmed by the health authority. The school management is responsible for the exemption until the suspicion is clarified.
- there is a COVID-19 case of illness at the school which has been confirmed by the health authority. The exemption is granted by the school management until 14 days after the last case of illness at the school.
- the school is located in a county or an independent city with more than 25 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 citizens in the last 7 days. Neighboring counties/cities that belong to the school's catchment area must also be taken into account. The exemption is granted by the school management based on the a recommendation by the Institute for Teacher Health (IfL) until the number of new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 citizens in the last 7 days is below 25 for 14 consecutive days.
- the infection rate nationwide is on average higher than 25 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 citizens in the last 7 days.
- in individual cases, due to the particular severity of the pre-existing condition(s) the assignment cannot be taken account for reasons of care until further notice. The exemption is granted by the school management, if necessary on the basis of a recommendation of the IfL.<sup>5</sup>

Daily updated information on new infections of the last seven days is available at the Robert Koch Institute (COVID-19-Dashboard).\*

Teachers who are released from classroom teaching will be given another official task, either at school or at home, as directed by the school management.

\* <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/478220a4c454480e823b17327b2bf1d4>

## b) Pregnant women

Pregnancy is generally not associated with an increased risk. In the case of a proven infection at school, the pregnant woman will be released from classroom teaching until 14 days after the last case of illness at the school. <sup>7</sup> The same applies in the case of a suspected case confirmed by the public health department for the time until the suspicion is clarified.

For pregnant schoolgirls, the same applies accordingly as for pregnant teachers. The affected schoolgirls will receive an offer in distance learning, which is equivalent to classroom teaching.

## c) Teachers and educational specialists at special schools

Teachers and pedagogical staff at special schools and in inclusive education who are involved in remedial care are provided with personal protective equipment as required. Details can be found in the separate notes for schools with the focus on holistic development and/or motor skills development as well as special schools with the holistic development course.

## 4. STUDENTS WITH PRE-EXISTING CONDITIONS

Students with pre-existing conditions are also subject to compulsory schooling. At the same time, their health protection must be given the highest priority.

A general assignment to a risk group for a severe COVID-19 disease course is not possible from a medical point of view, especially for children and adolescents. The German Society for Child and Adolescent Medicine (DGKJ) assumes that children and adolescents with chronic diseases that are well compensated or well treated do not have to fear a higher risk for a more severe COVID-19 disease than the general life risk.\*\* In this respect, the parents/custodians, in consultation with the physicians treating the child, must critically examine and weigh up in each individual case to what extent the possible considerable health risk makes a longer absence from class and thus isolation of the student absolutely necessary.

\*[https://sgdsued.rlp.de/fileadmin/sgdsued/Aktuelles/Corona\\_SGD\\_Sued\\_informiert/Info\\_Mutter\\_schutz\\_-\\_Stand\\_02-06-2020.pdf](https://sgdsued.rlp.de/fileadmin/sgdsued/Aktuelles/Corona_SGD_Sued_informiert/Info_Mutter_schutz_-_Stand_02-06-2020.pdf)

\*\*[https://www.dgkj.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Meldungen\\_2020/200506\\_SN\\_Schulbefreiung\\_Risikogruppen\\_final\\_alt.pdf](https://www.dgkj.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Meldungen_2020/200506_SN_Schulbefreiung_Risikogruppen_final_alt.pdf)



In this context, it should also be examined whether regular schooling with separate hygiene measures can be an alternative to exemption from compulsory attendance (protected presence), so that the connection to the school and, if possible, to the class community will not be lost (e.g. distance from fellow students, wearing a higher quality protective mouth-nose cover). In this case, only individual activities in which contact is difficult to avoid will be continued at a distance or carried out at different times and places from fellow students (e.g. sport), while attendance events will always be given priority. This procedure may be appropriate after consultation with the doctor treating the student.

If an exemption from attendance classes is deemed medically necessary, this must be proven by a medical certificate and presented to the school. The students concerned will be offered distance learning, which is equivalent to classroom instruction.

## **5. RELATIVES WITH RISK-INCREASING PRE-EXISTING CONDITIONS**

If a student lives with a relative - in particular parents, grandparents or siblings - in a domestic community and this relative has a relevant illness in which infection with SARS-Cov-2 poses a particularly high health risk, priority should be given to infection prevention measures within the domestic community to protect these relatives.

The non-attendance of students in classroom lessons can only be considered in strictly limited exceptional cases and only temporarily to protect their relatives. This presumes that a medical certificate from the relative concerned is presented, from which the corona-relevant previous illness can be deduced.

A release from participation in classroom lessons can be considered if the relative is temporarily in a state of increased vulnerability due to the individual course of his or her previous illness. The obligation of the student to participate in distance learning and to take part in examinations remains.

The same applies to teachers and educational staff.

## **6. SCHOOL CATERING: BREAK SALES - CANTEEN OPERATION - EU SCHOOL PROGRAM:**

Food and beverages sales during breaks and canteen operation are possible under consideration of the necessary hygiene and safety measures according to the respectively valid Corona control regulation Rhineland-Palatinate.

The obligation to wear a mouth-nose-cover (MNB) in the lunchroom is only waived at the place of eating. It must be ensured that the distance of 1.5 m between students of the different classes or courses is observed

The EU School Program will be continued in school year 2020/21. Regardless of the fact that a transmission of the corona virus via food is in principle very unlikely\* , the general rules of food hygiene should always be observed when handling food. These hygiene rules, which have already been published as part of the EU School Program, are still valid\*\* .

\*[https://www.bfr.bund.de/de/kann\\_das\\_neuartige\\_coronavirus\\_ueber\\_lebensmittel\\_und\\_gegenschaende\\_uebertragen\\_werden\\_-244062.html](https://www.bfr.bund.de/de/kann_das_neuartige_coronavirus_ueber_lebensmittel_und_gegenschaende_uebertragen_werden_-244062.html), Stand 06.08.2020

\*\* <https://mueef.rlp.de/de/themen/ernaehrung/schule-isst-besser/eu-schulprogramm-in-rheinland-pfalz/>

## **7. DOCUMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

A key element in the fight against any pandemic is to interrupt the chains of infection.

In order to enable consistent contact management by the public health department in the event of an infection or a suspected case, the following must be observed in particular:

- regular documentation of attendance in class and course books
- daily documentation of the presence of staff regularly employed in the school
- Documentation of individual support with close contact to pupils (e.g. integration staff)
- Daily documentation of the presence of other persons via lists of names and telephone numbers in the secretariat (e.g. craftsmen, representatives of the school supervisory authority, subject supervisors, extracurricular partners, guardians) Their presence should be reduced to the bare minimum.

### **Corona Warning App**

The Corona Warning App can make an additional contribution to the containment of the pandemic by identifying and notifying persons who have had an epidemiologically relevant encounter with a corona-positive person more quickly than with classic tracking. It also helps to reduce the time lag between the positive test of a person and the identification and information of their contacts.

The use of the app should be expressly recommended to all those involved in school life.

\*[https://www.bfr.bund.de/de/kann\\_das\\_neuartige\\_coronavirus\\_ueber\\_lebensmittel\\_und\\_gegenstaende\\_uebertragen\\_werden\\_-244062.html](https://www.bfr.bund.de/de/kann_das_neuartige_coronavirus_ueber_lebensmittel_und_gegenstaende_uebertragen_werden_-244062.html) , status 06.08.2020

\*\* <https://mueef.rlp.de/de/themen/ernaehrung/schule-isst-besser/eu-schulprogramm-in-rheinland-pfalz/>

## 8. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

In schools, the Infection Protection Act stipulates that the management of the facility is responsible for ensuring hygiene.

### a) Procedure in case of illness at school

Both the suspicion of a COVID-19 disease and the disease itself must be reported according to § 6 para. 1 no. 1 letter t IfSG.

The report by name must be made without delay and must be submitted to the competent public health authority no later than 24 hours after the person making the report has been informed. The public health authorities usually provide standardized registration forms for this purpose. A corresponding form is also available on the website of the Rhineland-Palatinate State Examination Office.\*

A notification may not be delayed due to individual missing data (cf. 9 (3) IfSG). At the same time, the responsible school supervisory authority must also be informed. The subsequent registration or correction of information must be made immediately after it is available to the public health department which received the original notification. The public health department is entitled to demand information the report must contain from the person making the report. The Health Department decides on its own responsibility after an appropriate risk assessment on the basis of the Infection Protection Act on quarantine measures, SARS-CoV-2 testing and closure of individual classes, courses or entire schools.

### b) Hygiene officers Persons

The school management appoints a person in charge of hygiene or a hygiene team to support them. In preparation for this activity, practice-oriented online seminars on current basics of hygiene and infection prevention are offered in cooperation with the University Medical Center Mainz and the Pedagogical State Institute\*\*. Their use is strongly recommended.

### (c) Communication

The issues associated with infection cases in schools are often associated with a high degree of emotionality. A coordinated approach conveys security. Therefore, due to the different responsibilities, early information of the affected groups of people (these can be: teachers, staff council, school parents' council, pupils, disabled persons' representatives, equal opportunity commissioners) is mandatory.

The principle applies: internal information before external information! Before informing the media and thus the public, it must be ensured that all persons directly affected have a sufficient level of information. See also "Basic rules for dealing with the press and media" in the handbook for dealing with crisis situations in schools.\*\*\*

\* <https://lua.rlp.de/de/service/downloads/infektionsschutz/>

\*\* <https://lms.bildung-rp.de/austausch/course/view.php?id=371>

\*\*\* [https://schulpsychologie.bildung-rp.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/schulpsychologie.bildung-rp.de/Hanreichung\\_Krise\\_November\\_2019.pdf](https://schulpsychologie.bildung-rp.de/fileadmin/user_upload/schulpsychologie.bildung-rp.de/Hanreichung_Krise_November_2019.pdf)

### **III. ADAPTATION OF MEASURES TO THE OCCURRENCE OF INFECTION**

The still very dynamic development of the corona pandemic makes it necessary to continue to monitor the infection process sensitively at local, regional and national level. Every new outbreak of the corona virus must be consistently countered together with the municipal authorities and the local health authorities and the necessary measures must be taken on the basis of the step-by-step concept as part of the testing strategy of the state government.

The school management is responsible for implementing the ordered measures in the school. In this case, the school's own hygiene plan must be adapted to the site-specific situation with appropriate infection protection measures. The orders of the public health department are to be followed.

The school organizational implementation for the lessons according to the scenarios 1-3 of the school-specific guidelines:

Scenario 1: Regular operation without distance requirement

Scenario 2: Restricted regular operation with distance requirement

Scenario 3: Temporary school closure

is carried out on the basis of the local, regional or state-wide occurrence of infection in the following stages of the Rhineland-Palatinate stage concept:

#### **Level 1: Detect & Contain - Testing and quarantine**

From the first case of COVID-19 in a school, the aim is to detect possible infections, to enable early treatment and to break chains of infection. For this purpose, the public health department orders tests\* and quarantine of:

- People with symptoms
- close contact persons (from 15 min "face to face"); Category I
- persons without symptoms in the unit (class, course, study group).

#### **Level 2: Local restrictions**

Depending on the number, context and distribution, as well as the risk of transmission, the primary goal in case of multiple COVID-19 cases in a school is to contain the infection.

In addition to the measures of level 1, the health authority decides on its own responsibility whether and how long individual classes, courses or entire schools are to be closed.

If the seven-day incidence rises continuously over a period of one week to over 25 per 100,000 inhabitants (on a county/city scale), the school authorities will decide on further measures in coordination with the health authorities. It will also have to be taken into account whether it is a population-wide case of infection or a narrowly defined "hotspot" such as in a production plant. Possible measures are those that can guarantee further instruction in regular operation (e.g. extension of the obligation to wear a mouth-and-nose covering) or measures that lead to a change to a rolling instruction system (restricted regular operation with distance requirements, change between classroom instruction and home learning phases).

\* [https://www.rlp.de/fileadmin/rlp-stk/pdf-Dateien/Corona/Teststrategie\\_SARS-CoV2\\_10062020.pdf](https://www.rlp.de/fileadmin/rlp-stk/pdf-Dateien/Corona/Teststrategie_SARS-CoV2_10062020.pdf)

### **Level 3: Large-scale restriction of public life**

If it is no longer possible to contain the infection (seven-day incidence  $>50$  per 100,000 inhabitants/county/city), further uncontrolled transmission of the virus must be prevented. For this purpose, in coordination with the highest state health authority, measures required regionally or nationwide are taken in addition to levels 1 and 2 (for the school sector, this means, among other things, keeping a minimum distance of 1.50 m, reduced group sizes, exemption from attendance lessons for persons at risk, nationwide school closures).