

Dear Parents, Dear Legal Guardians,

Testing is an essential component of the comprehensive strategy adopted by the federal and state governments to fight the pandemic. As an additional building block to prevent infection, rapid antigen testing has already been taking place in schools on a voluntary and indiscriminate basis since February 2021.

In view of the current status of the coronavirus pandemic, the Bundestag [Federal Parliament] resolved on 21.04.2021 to make extensive amendments to the Infection Protection Act that involve a nationwide emergency brake subject to the incidence rates determined. The federal legal provisions also incorporate school operations and are expected to be implemented – conditional to the conclusion of the legislative procedure and anticipated enactment of the law – as of 26.04.2021. Consequently, as of 26.04.2021, children attending primary and special-needs schools on site in Saarland must also be tested twice a week. In contrast to the teaching staff, your children will, as before, continue to be tested by the doctors, dentists, pharmacists or aid organisations already cooperating with the schools.

Alongside testing, it is absolutely essential to further comply with the provisions of the sample hygiene plan to prevent infection at schools. Strict observance of the rules on wearing masks, ventilation, social distancing and hand disinfection must continue.

Our aim in so doing is to detect coronavirus infections as early as possible, in this way making schools an even safer place and, consequently, providing added protection to as many pupils, teachers, parents and other people as possible.

Testing process

The tests are carried out at school on two days a week by doctors and/or their qualified staff – in this case in the presence of a doctor – or pharmacists, dentists or trained members of aid organisations. Of course, the instructions for carrying out the test provided by the manufacturer will be observed throughout the process.

With respect to tests for which only a swab in the front of the nose – anterior nasal area (nasal swab, nasal test, ‘nose-picking test’) is authorised, only this type of swab will be used. In this case, the swab sample is taken from the anterior nasal area, approximately 2 cm inside the nostril, from the nasal wall. This means that the stick is only inserted in the anterior nasal area. This swab, also called the ‘nose-picking test’, is very gentle on the children and is also generally accepted by the children. You can access a film on https://www.saarland.de/mbk/DE/portale/bildungsserver/home/home_node.html to see how such a test is carried out. Although it shows an adolescent testing herself, it clearly and convincingly displays how easy and minimally invasive the nasal swab is.

In addition to the LYHER antigen test kit and the MP Rapid SARS-CoV-2 antigen test card used so far and, in some cases, also to be used in the future in schools, the mouth and throat test (swab through the mouth at the back of the throat – posterior pharyngeal area) and the nose and throat test (swab through the nose to the back of the throat - posterior pharyngeal area) have also been authorised alongside the gentle nasal swab. As a rule, the nasal swab (‘nose-picking test’) is also carried out in the case of these two types of test.

Testing at our school:

Frau Oberle, Praxis Dr. Othmann

Testing will take place on the following days of the week:

dienstags und freitags, ab 8.00 Uhr

Test result

The test result is available after approximately 30 minutes. If the test is negative, your child can continue to attend classes on school premises; it receives a test certificate that can also be used in other places where such proof is necessary.

If the test is positive, there is a suspicion that your child is infected with coronavirus. The school will notify you if that is the case. Your child must then be collected from school, as it may no longer attend classes or indeed school at that point.

In parallel, in accordance with the provisions of the Infection Protection Act (§ 6 Subsection 1 No. 1 Letter t and § 8 Subsection 1 No. 7 IfSG [**Infection Protection Act**]), as a school we are obliged to notify the health authorities of the positive test of your child. In the process we must provide the health authorities with certain information, e.g. your name, the name and class of your child, your address and telephone number, and the date of the test, so that the health authorities can contact you. Your child should self-isolate at home (i.e. it should stay at home and not come into contact with others outside) until the health authorities have contacted you. You will subsequently receive information from the health authorities on how to proceed. If the health authorities order quarantine and, as a result, you must take care of your child at home, you may, if applicable, claim child sickness benefit (unpaid leave in accordance with § 45 Subsection 2a SGB V [**German Social Code**]).

Mandatory testing

As of 26 April 2021 only those children who have complied with mandatory testing may go to school to attend lessons and educational activities offered in the morning and the care service in the afternoon or holiday care services within the framework of the voluntary all-day school programme [**FGTS**]. Compliance requirements for mandatory testing are considered to have been fulfilled if the twice-weekly tests offered at school have been taken.

Compliance requirements for mandatory testing are also considered to have been fulfilled if alternative proof is presented (in accordance with § 5a of the ordinance on the fight against the coronavirus pandemic - Verordnung zur Bekämpfung der Corona-Pandemie) for both of the days on which the testing takes place at school that your child is not infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Valid in this case are test certificates that confirm the negative result of a SARS-CoV-2 PoC antigen test taken either on the day before the testing offered at school or on the same day at a private test site or a test site operating by order of the Federal State of Saarland (e.g. private test site, test centre or pharmacy) or with a self-testing kit.

Please note that the certificate of a private test site will not be accepted if it was issued within the familial context and not in connection with the operator status or utilisation of the service.

Only those without symptoms indicating infection with coronavirus may take the tests at school. Anybody with corresponding symptoms must not enter the school (see sample hygiene plan). If your child has such symptoms, it must stay at home for at least two days until the symptoms have subsided. It is recommended that you take your child to a doctor for diagnostic confirmation (call the surgery beforehand). Of course, it is up to you to decide whether a visit to the doctor is necessary.

If you do not agree to your child being tested at school, you can give notice by way of an informal written communication that your child will not be attending classes on school premises. In this case, it is not possible for your child to attend lessons, participate in educational activities or use the care services during school and holiday times on school premises.

An exception to this rule is if your child – generally for medical reasons – cannot participate in the testing, a medical certificate to this effect being provided by the attending doctor. In this case the ban to enter is lifted and your child may come to school.

Even if your child is no longer registered to attend lessons on school premises or is not permitted entry to the school, it is nevertheless subject to compulsory schooling. In this case your child must take part in the ‘learning from home’ programme.

Your child must come to school for proof of academic achievement (such as class tests), which is, in accordance with the provisions of legislation pertaining to schools, to be provided in the course of school attendance. Wherever possible, the school test will be written in groups in a separate room from the children attending lessons on the premises. Proof of the absence of infection with the SARS-CoV-2 virus in terms of § 5a of the ordinance on the fight against the coronavirus pandemic - Verordnung zur Bekämpfung der Corona-Pandemie – is not required. In this case the pupils enter the school at a specified time and leave it immediately after proof of academic achievement has been provided.

If your child does not take the tests due to acute illness or absence excused for other reasons, it may, as soon as it has recovered, return to school and take part in the testing programme again.

If you do not give notice that your child will not take part in the testing programme and it cannot provide alternative proof of a negative result, it may not enter the school. You will be notified immediately of the situation and asked to collect your child from school.

Declaration of consent and privacy policy

A declaration of consent from the parents or legal guardians for carrying out the tests within the framework of the mandatory testing programme is not necessary provided that the school is already in possession of a declaration of consent for the existing testing service. If you have not as yet submitted a declaration of consent and you do not wish to withdraw your children from attending classes on school premises, please provide the school with the completed and signed consent form.

Enclosed for your information is the consent form.

If, for your part, your child should be taking the tests but it refuses to have the test carried out, the test will obviously not be administered in this situation! You will be notified immediately and asked to collect your child from school.

Many thanks.

Yours faithfully,