

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Dear Sir/Madam,
dear parents and guardians of children attending nurseries and schools,

the modified day-to-day operational procedures of schools and nurseries was commenced following the summer holidays. Ever since then, the issue of infection control in shared facilities has been given high priority. The Hessian Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs has published a revised version of the Framework Hygiene Plan (*Rahmenhygieneplan*) (Version 6.0 dated 28/09/2020) to be implemented in schools in Offenbach. The municipal health department has drafted supplementary hygiene recommendations, which must likewise be implemented.

Adapted local restrictions have meant that, following the summer holidays, the infection in Offenbach has been controlled such that the healthcare system has not been overloaded, and that schools and nurseries have been able to fulfil their education and teaching remit without any new significant limitations. Widespread closures have been avoided.

The current rate of new Covid-19 infections throughout the entire Rhine-Main area calls for a further appropriate response from the municipal authorities, so that the occurrence of infections can also be kept under control during the autumn, and the coming winter months.

A high number of new Covid-19 infections is currently being registered in Offenbach. The 7-day incidence rate per 100,000 inhabitants was 110.5 cases on 16 October 2020. According to current scientific knowledge, children play a very minor role in the transmission of the virus. To date, some 2,500 children have been tested in Offenbach because a positive case was identified in their school class or day nursery group. This only produced a very few positive test results so that, according to the information of the municipal health department, the likelihood of infection among children is still regarded as very low. Children generally become infected by adults. These findings are not a cause for concern, but they do call for coordinated preventative measures to ensure that our facilities and institutions can continue to operate after the autumn break.

Measures at secondary schools

The City is acting in accordance with the Escalation and Prevention Model of the State of Hesse, and in coordination with the neighbouring urban and district authorities, and ministries. Now, in the two weeks after the autumn break, schools must ensure the precautionary wearing of face masks including during lessons. Physical education activities must be conducted without any physical contact. Staff in nurseries are also required to wear a face mask outside of their core groups. These precautionary measures and the strict separation between the respective nursery groups may unfortunately mean that the care time is reduced within individual nurseries.

These measures are currently the most effective means of combating the spread of the corona virus, and preventing the extensive closure of schools and nurseries. The obligation to wear a face mask is proportionate. It constitutes a very minor intrusion into the rights of those concerned, and these rights would be much more severely affected through widespread closures.

The trigger for the increased occurrence of infections locally, continues to be the risk-taking behaviour of segments of the population who are not adhering to the rules on distancing and hygiene. Infections are also occurring in connection with

travelling to high-risk areas. And the autumnal temperatures and the current low levels of sunshine are unfortunately boosting the spread of the corona virus. We are therefore appealing to you to regularly ventilate your recreation rooms.

The police will be carrying out intensified checks within the city, in bars, and restaurants and in buses operated by the Offenbach public transport company (*Offenbacher Verkehrsbetriebe*) to ensure, among other things, that the rules on the wearing of face masks and maintaining physical distance are observed.

After the autumn break, the modified day-to-day operational procedures will continue subject to the corona conditions. Please observe the additional rules, and encourage your child to behave accordingly.

Managing infections in day nurseries and schools

Parents are repeatedly worried about how the municipal health department will respond to the occurrence of an infection at their child's school. On this point, we want you to know that the possible risk of an infection in the school is assessed individually for every specific case of infection. The procedure adopted will not always be the same as for other previous cases. In each specific case, the doctors of the municipal health department consider a range of risk factors to determine whether it is necessary for an entire class or day nursery group, or just individual children, to go into quarantine and/or be tested. The risk assessment will be based on the following defined criteria. The relevant questions include: Was a face mask continuously worn? How well was the area ventilated? How were the children sat down together? How close was their contact to other children? For how long was the child contagious before the infection became known? Where, and for how long, did the child remain in the school during this time?

The decision on whether to test a child is also always dependent on the amount of testing capacity currently available among doctors and laboratories. Patients with symptoms are always given priority over suspected cases without any symptoms. It is also necessary to maintain adequate testing capacities for people from risk groups, and children generally do not belong to one of these. Nevertheless, the municipal health department is also continuing to endeavour that testing options always remain available to children, where possible.

Another question concerns the notifications provided to parents. More recently, it has no longer been possible to do this promptly in every case. Contact tracing is an extremely time-intensive process, in which the health department is engaged from early morning to night-time, seven days a week. As numbers of infections continue to rise, contact tracing is a considerable task. Therefore, in some individual cases it may be that parents are not notified by the health department. This happens particularly when the health department deems that no further action is necessary for the child in question.

Information for parents available online and via the parents' hotline

We sincerely understand that you, as parents and guardians, would like to be kept thoroughly informed about any possible incidence of infection in your child's school or nursery. However, we would ask you, as of now, to please understand that, in future, there may be more frequent situations in which information can only be provided via the head of your school or nursery, so that delays in the operating processes of the health department can be kept to the bare minimum. So, if you do require information, may we please ask that you first contact your child's school or nursery. The municipal health department is no longer able to

promptly respond to all the inquiries that are also received every day from other citizens.

Alongside the citizens' hotline (*Bürgertelefon*), we will also be providing a parental hotline (*Elterntelefon*) - scheduled to start Wednesday, 21 October - as additional point of contact for you, alongside your child's school or nursery. You will be able to call it between 10 am and 4 pm, using the telephone number 069 840004-567. You can use it to obtain general information about quarantining, testing and the Covid-19 disease. You will also find a form for contacting the municipal health department, as well as other information for parents, online at www.offenbach.de/corona-eltern.

Other sources of information:

- The Public Relations department has prepared information in a range of languages for travellers returning to the area. You can download it using the following link. Because this does not entail sending any personal data, the link may be distributed via messenger services.

Yours sincerely



Sabine Groß
City Councillor for Nurseries



Paul-Gerhard Weiß
City Councillor for Schools

Offenbach am Main, 22 October 2020