



To
Parents and legal guardians of
all pupils in North Rhine-Westphalia

Arrangements in schools following the expiry of Covid-19 legislation

Dear Parents,

dear Guardians,

I am writing to you today to explain how our schools will be affected by the expiry of the Covid-19 legislation on 31 January 2023.

For nearly three years, dealing with the coronavirus resulted in significant changes to our day-to-day lives and school attendance in particular. Thanks to the efforts made by each and every one of us, our schools have coped well with the pandemic over the last autumn and winter. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you personally for your engagement and support.

Looking at the current situation, we can now once again work together to take a major step towards achieving normality in our day-to-day lives at school.

Thanks to the vaccine programmes and recovery following a coronavirus infection, there is now a high level of immunity in the population, which naturally includes both pupils and teachers in our schools.

Recent changes made to the law in North Rhine-Westphalia are in step with comparable amendments to Covid-19 legislation in almost all other German states. As of 31 January 2023, the legal provisions previously applicable to our schools will also cease to apply in their current form.

After consulting with my colleagues at the Ministry for Labour, Health and Social Services, I would like to inform you of the following important changes from 1 February 2023:

The routine monthly issuing of five self-tests per month will be discontinued. Any rapid tests still available at schools can be issued to and

used by pupils on request after this time until stocks of these tests have been used up.

Staff and pupils are welcome to continue wearing a mask for their own protection or to protect others. It goes without saying that no one will be treated any differently if they choose to wear a face mask – staff and pupils, together with you as parents of our pupils, can make this decision individually, as has been the case in recent months.

The former five-day quarantine rule now no longer applies. From 1 February 2023, the amended coronavirus legislation strongly recommends that people who test positive wear at least a medical-grade mask (surgical mask) in enclosed spaces outside their own home for a period of five days after taking their self-test. This recommendation does not apply to children aged six or under, nor to people who are unable to wear a face mask for medical or other important and medically justifiable reasons. General good hygiene rules continue to apply as normal in our schools. (<https://www.schulministerium.nrw/infektionsschutz>)

The following basic rule continues to apply: **anyone who is ill should not attend school**. In this respect, I trust you will take personal responsibility for ensuring your children only attend school when well.

Schools can ask pupils to show a doctor's note only if there is good reason to believe that lessons are not being missed for health reasons (section 43(2) of the Schools Act).

Good hygiene practice, including taking care when coughing or sneezing, ensuring regular handwashing and disinfection as well as following advice on room ventilation, will continue to form part of our normal school day, and will help to minimise health risks (especially those still present from Covid-19) in our schools (<https://www.schulministerium.nrw/lueftung-raumluftfiltergeraete-und-co2-messgeraete>).

We will continue to track developments closely together with our colleagues at the Ministry for Labour, Health and Social Services. If the overall situation should change again, we will act promptly to offer a corresponding package of support and recommendations for action.

We will also continue to use the NRW Education Portal (www.schulministerium.nrw) to provide you with the latest news and information.

Our decision to take a step towards achieving normality in our day-to-day lives at school is based on medical advice and recent developments in our communities, and will help to ensure that everyone at school can continue to enjoy working and teaching together.

Once again, I would like to thank you personally for your cooperation in coping with the challenges of the pandemic, and I wish you all the best for the future.

Sincerely,

Dorothee Feller

Minister for Schools and Education,
State of North Rhine-Westphalia