

Vienna, 14 November 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The level of COVID-19 infections has once again led to the need for a hard lockdown in Austria. To ensure that the healthcare system can continue to function and to deliver care to patients in hospitals, all sectors of society must play their part: shops must once again close, services such as hairdressers are not permitted to open, and people must work from home wherever possible in order to minimise contact with others in public spaces and workplaces.

Schools are also affected by these measures.

From Tuesday 17 November 2020, there will be only limited operations with supervised learning at primary schools, new secondary schools¹, the lower level of academic secondary schools² and pre-vocational schools³. All children and young people who can be cared for at home and do not have any special educational needs should stay at home.

Learning support in small groups will be provided for children who need childcare, however. In addition, children who do not have a suitable place to study at home can come to school and do the work they have been assigned at learning stations there.

It is particularly important to me that children and young people who find certain subjects difficult or who need special support are well looked after. They will be actively encouraged by their teachers to come to school so that they do not fall behind in any areas or struggle to keep up with the rest of the class.

Normal school operations will resume on Monday 7 December.

You can play an important role in helping to ensure that the lockdown has its desired effect: please reduce social contact during this period and if possible please keep your children at home with you during their free time, even if this is difficult for everyone and is a particular challenge for young people.

¹ Neue Mittelschulen

² AHS-Unterstufe

³ Polytechnische Schulen

The supplementary sheet provides tips and advice to help you successfully manage these three weeks of home learning. But there is one piece of advice that I think is particularly important: if it all gets to be too much for you or your children, it's best to let your child return to school temporarily. One or two days can often take the pressure off everyone.

Your school will provide you directly with all further information about home learning and how to register for learning support or learning stations at the school.

I would like to wish you and your family all the best in these difficult times.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Heinz Fassmann". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Heinz Fassmann

Federal Minister for Education, Science and Research

Vienna, 14 November 2020

Information for parents and guardians

Digital communication and digital learning

Check with your school again on what communication channels will be used and on how teaching materials will be sent

- In the federal school sector, the Digital School Portal (www.pods.gv.at) is available to all pupils attending federally run schools (Bundesschulen).
- If you would like to find out how the learning platforms are used, the Distance Learning Service Portal (<https://serviceportal.eeducation.at/>) provides quick guide videos for parents and guardians on how to use the most common learning platforms.

Online parent/teacher appointments

- If available at your school, take the opportunity to speak to your child's teachers via video call.

Electronic textbooks

- Electronic textbooks for home learning can be accessed at www.digi4school.at. Your school can order the access codes required.]

Materials from Eduthek and Edutube

- In addition, around 6,000 practice exercises are available at www.eduthek.at and around 800 educational videos can be viewed on www.edutube.at.

Home learning: tips on how to structure your day

- Get up as you normally would on a work and school day, and wake up your children as normal. Maintain your daily routines (showering, getting dressed, having breakfast, etc.).
- Try to create a separate, quiet place for your children to work that is available to them for the entire time. If possible, keep learning and play spaces separate.
- Try to establish a daily schedule at home and get your children involved in helping you plan it. Structure is very important for home learning. Don't forget to include study breaks.

Support with problems and difficulties

- Make sure that both you and your child can be easily contacted by the teachers. If your child is feeling overwhelmed or does not understand the work, please get in touch with the teacher in question.
- If you feel that you or your child need support to help you manage the challenging situation, please contact your local school psychology advice service (for contact details, visit www.schulpsychologie.at/kontakt) or – if you need urgent help – the Rat auf Draht hotline on 147, which is available throughout Austria 24 hours a day.
- Personal learning support for your child is available from “digital buddies” at: <https://weiterlernen.at/digitale-buddies>

Contact

If you have any questions about school operations and COVID-19, please call the **national** coronavirus hotline set up by the Ministry of Education on 0800 21 65 95 (Mon-Fri 8am to 4pm) or its Citizens’ Service on 0800 20 56 76 (Mon-Fri 9am to 4pm).

In the individual federal states, the hotlines of the Boards of Education will be able to advise you. A list of the hotlines is available here: www.bmbwf.gv.at/hotlines.