

The Minister of State

SAXON STATE MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION & CULTURE
Postfach 10 09 10 101079 Dresden

To all parents
of students
attending public schools
in the Free State of Saxony

Dresden, 30 March 2020

Cc:
To all parents
of students
attending independent (private) schools

Dear parents,

The measures necessary to tackle the coronavirus pandemic are posing completely new challenges for us all. Saxony's schools have been closed since 18 March 2020 – an unprecedented situation. Since then, teachers have been setting their students tasks to enable learning from home.

I am aware that you, as parents at this time, are under particular pressure. You yourselves have jobs to go to or are working from home, while also looking after your children and helping and encouraging them through this home-learning phase. I thank you sincerely for this.

I would also like to thank you for your understanding regarding the closure of our schools, and for the creativity that has facilitated distance learning. The requests and reports being sent to me from all over Saxony paint a very varied picture as to how well each school has been able to organise the home-learning phase.

If you have any questions or require assistance with the learning exercises, you can contact the school/teachers directly. With mutual consent, these exceptional times can also be used to provide personalised support tailored to your child's strengths and weaknesses. Good communication between family and the school is particularly important at this time.

I want you to know that, as parents, you cannot, nor must you, replace school lessons.

The school will provide your children with learning exercises. The current situation requires these to be completed at home.



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Public transport access:
Accessed via tram lines
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Information regarding acceptance
of electronically signed and
encrypted electronic documents is
available at
www.smk.sachsen.de/kontakt.htm

Everyone is aware that the conditions for home-based learning will vary greatly during the school closures – both in terms of the technical capacities of each school and the learning environment. But in terms of the schools' services and your personal support capacities as well. There must consequently be no excessive demands or performance pressure.

It is important to ensure children have a regular learning time. This should not, under any circumstances, extend beyond the usual school hours, and family life can of course not be geared around school lesson and break times either.

Motivate your children to stay focused on the exercises. Show them recognition and encouragement when they complete a task. You don't need to act as teacher; simply foster a sense of age-appropriate independence.

Fulfilling the curriculum for the rest of the school year is not the main aim. There will be opportunities to finish it off next school year, including for students transitioning to advanced secondary education. Students in their final year will soon be receiving a letter explaining the support that will be available to them in the lead-up to their graduation. Students sitting their *Abitur* school-leaving examination have already received this letter, because, at this stage, their examinations will be starting after the Easter holidays.

I just also want to briefly mention the use of media. Television, radio and the Internet are currently offering a number of interesting shows and services in many areas of education. It's good to discuss what has been seen, heard and read, as this can broaden your children's view of the world. The following link lists several good options:

<https://www.medienbildung.sachsen.de/digitale-werkzeuge-in-der-unterrichtsfreien-zeit-und-bei-schulschliessungen-5234.html>

Dear parents, you, teachers and all those responsible are facing the same professional and personal challenges. Rest assured that, when it comes to continued school studies, we are mindful of the tough situation the corona crisis has caused. Teachers are endeavouring to provide your children with appropriate support during this home-based learning phase, and will provide transparent feedback on completed tasks. Regarding assessment, we would like to take this opportunity to mention a few points, which are listed separately based on school type. But firstly, a few that generally apply across the board:

- It is the teacher's responsibility, as an educator, to assess performances.
- Completion of exercises should generally be assessed and evaluated jointly by the teachers and students. The teacher's assessment may also be supplemented or replaced by the student's self-assessment.
- Assessments must be respectful and encouraging, and contain tips for further learning.
- Sensitivity will also be required when regular lessons resume at schools. Excessive demands must be avoided.

Primary schools

- Grading of completed exercises should generally be waived at primary schools. The completed exercises should, however, certainly be assessed in the form of feedback on learning progress and the specific need for further study.
- Recognising aspects such as enthusiasm for learning, determination, initiative, creativity and care in completing tasks may be incorporated into the students' grade for general behaviour. This is to be used as encouragement, not to the students' detriment.
- Primary-school learning tasks should primarily serve to consolidate already established foundations. New learning content, particularly in elementary classes, cannot be taught by parents.

Secondary schools (*Oberschulen*)

- Grading should largely be waived at secondary schools. The completed exercises should, however, certainly be assessed in the form of feedback on learning progress and the specific need for further study.
- In final years, particular emphasis should be placed on the written and oral examination subjects. Teachers whose subjects are not relevant to examinations in final years should concentrate on other levels and any students with special needs.

Special-needs schools

- The recommendations for primary and secondary schools generally also apply to special-needs schools.

***Gymnasien* (grammar schools/upper secondary schools)**

- Grading for higher levels is becoming increasingly feasible at *Gymnasien*. Tasks such as creating collages, presentations, projects, tasks determining learning progress, or written homework relating to other performances have always been completed outside the classroom and assessed by the teacher. Given the current situation, teachers will be more sensitive and exercise a sense of what is appropriate when assessing work, taking into account the individual learning environments.
- Grading for semester 12/II will be governed by the decree dated 17 March 2020, in which the minimum number of tests for this school year has been abolished. Assessments of other performances can continue to be recorded and included in the 12/II semester grading until the end of the 12/II semester on 18 June 2020. This particularly applies to courses requiring contributions.

Berufliche Gymnasien (upper secondary schools offering academic and vocational components)

- Academic tasks completed at home may be graded. Components such as assignments during the qualification phase have always been completed outside the classroom and graded by the teacher.
- For final-year students, particular emphasis should be placed on the written and oral examination subjects. Regarding grading for semester 13/II, the minimum number of tests has been abolished for this school year. Assessments of other performances can continue to be recorded and included in the 13/II semester grading until the end of the school year on 18/6/2020. This particularly also applies to subjects requiring contributions. The teachers decide whether new course content taught during the school closure will be assessed.

Fachoberschulen (specialised secondary education institutions)

- Academic tasks completed at home may be graded. Components such as projects in year 12 have always been completed outside the classroom and graded by the teacher.
- In year 12, particular focus must be placed on the relevant written examination subjects and oral examination in the subject of English.
- Content already learned at school can be consolidated and new content added, in both years 11 and 12. The teachers decide whether new course content taught during the school closure will be assessed.
- The number of academic requirements set by the subject teachers' meeting may differ for the 2019/2020 school year.

Berufsfachschulen (vocational colleges)

- The teachers decide whether new course content taught during the school closure will be assessed. Unexcused absences resulting from the current situation affecting practical vocational training will not disadvantage the student.

Berufsschulen / vocational schools (dual system of vocational training, vocational preparation, basic vocational training)

- The scope of home-based tasks should be set in such a way that participation in any work experience (insofar as this goes ahead) is not affected. In final years, particular emphasis should be placed on the content of the final written examination. For the time remaining until the end of the school year, the number of grades awarded must be sensible, taking into account the exceptional situation and not disadvantaging the vocational students in any way. Ideally, grades will be awarded in as many learning fields as possible.

Fachschulen (technical colleges)

- In addition to the project to be completed at the college itself, tasks here include presentations, written homework and other performances. For final-year students, particular emphasis must be placed on the written and oral learning fields of the complex examinations. For students completing the additional training established in Section 6 of the Technical College Regulations (FSO), the focus should also be on the (examination) subjects relevant to obtaining *Fachhochschulreife* (entry qualification to a university of applied science).
- For the time remaining until the end of the school year, the number of grades awarded must be sensible, taking into account the exceptional situation and not disadvantaging the vocational students in any way. Ideally, grades will be awarded in as many learning fields as possible. It is important to ensure the scope of home-based tasks is set in such a way that participation in voluntary work experience in areas of critical infrastructure is not affected.

You will of course be wondering what will happen after the Easter holidays. An objective evaluation means taking into account crisis-induced developments between now and the end of the school year.

We currently expect regular lessons to be able to resume after the Easter holidays. But we will also need to assess the situation on a daily basis over the coming weeks. Preparations are of course in place for various scenarios, enabling us to react accordingly to a fluid situation. We will keep you updated, including in relation to further questions that may arise regarding the current school year.

Thank you for your commitment to supporting your children in these challenging times. Stay well.

Kind regards,



Christian Piwarz