



The Minister

Ministerium für Schule und Bildung NRW, D-40190 Düsseldorf

17 February 2022

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To the
Parents and guardians of all
school-age children in elementary
and primary schools

Yvonne Gebauer MdL

Change of the coronavirus test method starting on 28 February 2022

Dear Parents,
Dear Guardians,

I am contacting you today in order to inform you early on about a basic change to the coronavirus test method for your children in the elementary and primary schools in North Rhine-Westphalia as of 28 February 2022.

As you are aware, the lolly-test method that had been implemented with great success for many months had to be changed on very short notice at the end of January due to the rising infection numbers in the overall population. That change was unavoidable in light of the prioritisation of test evaluations due to the new Federal test regulation (*Bundestestverordnung*) and bottlenecks in the evaluating laboratories in some regions. However, this change led to insecurities among many families when there was a positive PCR pool test. I would like to use this letter today to apologise to you for the very short notice of the communication at adjustment of the test method and the connected issues for you and your families.

We have taken measures to put an end to the insecurities connected to the pool tests. Specifically, this means that we will change the test system at elementary and primary schools at the end of February.

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From Monday, 28 February 2022, onwards, only pupils not yet immunised, i.e., those children who are not fully vaccinated or recovered, will perform an antigen self-test thrice per week outside of school, i.e., usually at home.

The non-immunised pupils will receive antigen self tests from school that they need to use to test themselves with your help at home on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. The tests can be done on the evening before.

You as parents represent once that the three weekly tests will be performed regularly and properly when the new test method begins. You must have your child bring the corresponding confirmation to school by 28 February 2022. Alternatively, you can continue to submit the certification from a test office that a negative antigen rapid test has been performed (so-called citizens' test ("*Bürgertest*"). Such a citizens' test is valid for 24 hours as well.

If there is any justified suspicion of a possible coronavirus infection regarding a child in school (e.g., due to indications of insufficient testing or existing symptoms), the school may perform an antigen self-test in the specific situation at the beginning of lessons.

The antigen self tests will be provided by the state and distributed to you or your children through the schools. The schools will inform you about the precise procedure.

I trust in your own responsibility and assume that you will only send your children to school with negative test results.

Furthermore, the test requirements for already immunised pupils are withdrawn from Monday, 28 February 2022, onwards. Your fully vaccinated or recovered children can, however, continue to participate in the test on a voluntary basis. This is strictly your own decision. You will receive these tests from the schools as well.

I am aware and regret that you as families and your children have been facing special challenges time and time again during the pandemic. Our young people in particular had to do without so many things that are part of growing up. I would like to assure you that I will continue to do everything I can to keep the burden for the children as low as possible and to permit them to attend school, which is very important, at the same time.

This includes the absolute continuation of attendance lessons, which is currently still ensured by testing and wearing of masks. More and more paediatricians and child psychologists, however, advise a return to greater normalcy in schools. Based on today's situation, I assume that there will be further reductions of measures if the number of infections keeps dropping.

I appeal to you as parents and guardians that you get vaccinated yourselves if you have not done so yet. Please also talk to your paediatricians about the possibility of vaccinating your children.

Thank you for your extraordinary commitment as parents and guardians in this pandemic.

With kind regards,

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yvonne Gebauer', written in a cursive style.

Yvonne Gebauer