

COVID-19 and Kindergarten: Policies and Guidelines

Tartu International School and Tartu International Kindergarten follow the policies and guidelines from the Estonian Government and the Estonian Health Board when setting the policies for the prevention of COVID-19 spread.

In addition, the schools and kindergartens in Estonia are given autonomy to implement additional measures to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 spread in their specific environment and community.

The aim of our kindergarten is to avoid the closure of the kindergarten and several measures have been implemented in order to safeguard our community.

Kindergarten and Traveling

Please follow the restrictions by the Estonian Government and the Estonian Health Board, which are regularly updated here:

<https://vm.ee/en/information-countries-and-self-isolation-requirements-passengers>

In order to maintain the feeling of security within the school and kindergarten community it is strongly recommended that the families and staff do not travel abroad at all. However, Children under 12 and adults who have received the vaccine or recovered from COVID-19 do not have to self-isolate after returning from a trip.

The measures to minimize contacts at kindergarten

- The children are dropped off and picked up outside the schoolhouse.
- Visitors: the parents are not permitted to enter the schoolhouse on a daily basis; visitors may enter the house only with the permission of the principal, wearing a mask is compulsory in specific situations (e.g. one-to-one meeting with a visitor).
- Whenever possible, activities are held outdoors.

Gathering and events at kindergarten

- Events involving the whole community (parents, teachers, students) take place outside, or, if it's not possible to organize it, the events are cancelled.
- The kindergarten does not participate in the local events that involve groups of children from other kindergartens.

- Daily meetings with the parents and giving-receiving updates takes place outdoors; in specific cases the meeting can be held indoors, protective equipment is used in such cases.

Personal protection equipment

- The kindergarten provides personal protection equipment for teachers (masks, gloves). The kindergarten also has a supply of masks for special cases (e.g. a parent is asked for a visit).
- The ventilation system of the building is being checked regularly and is working full day, the rooms are aired regularly.
- Wet cleaning and disinfection of the room takes place every evening, the often-touched surfaces are disinfected during the day.
- Everybody who enters the house must disinfect their hands at the front door. The teachers monitor that hand-washing routine is followed every day. Each group has disinfection supplies.

Procedure in case of illness and COVID-19-positive case

Any staff member and child must stay at home in case of signs of illness. The family doctor needs to be contacted who will, by the symptoms, decide whether a COVID-19 test should be taken or not.

In case of a positive COVID-19 case within the community (staff member, parent, child) the principal must be notified. The principal will immediately inform the parents and teachers via email. The notification will not include any personal details. In cooperation with the kindergarten, the Estonian Health Board will determine the persons considered as close contacts and reach out to the respective families. The families receive further information from and must follow the instructions of the Health Board.

Children under the age of 12 who were in close contact with a COVID-positive person and do not have any symptoms can continue coming to the kindergarten and do not need to be tested. The children cannot attend hobby activities out of our kindergarten (training, music clubs etc.) for 10 days. Fully vaccinated or recovered staff members can come to work as long as they don't show any symptoms.

Those who are not considered close contacts (see below) must monitor themselves.

If a child falls ill during the kindergarten day, the parents are notified and the child is separated from the group (supervised), and needs to be picked up as soon as possible.

The Health Board considers closing an educational institution if more than 10% of students in an educational institution are COVID-19 positive. However, please note that due to the speciality of our community (siblings both at school and kindergarten, sharing the building between the school and kindergarten) it is highly possible that the whole building is closed in case of one positive COVID-19 case in our community. The decision is made by the Health Board and the management board of the kindergarten.

What happens when the kindergarten is closed due COVID-19?

The kindergarten can be closed by order from the Estonian Government (in case the emergency situation is announced), the Estonian Health Board or the management board of the kindergarten. In case of the closure of the kindergarten, face-to-face activities and care cannot take place in the kindergarten. The children stay at home with parents or guardians. The kindergarten will organize some activities that can be done remotely (e.g. online video sessions for a preschoolers group, recommendations for daily activities with the children, daily communication with group teachers). Unfortunately it is not possible to organize full care remotely and the parents are asked to think through their family's plan how to manage the period when the kindergarten is closed. Discount on the tuition fees will apply for the period of closure.

Who is considered a close contact?

If one of the following applies, one is considered as close contact and shall contact the Health Board for further instructions. Such persons shall not attend kindergarten or any other public venue:

- Lives in the same household with COVID-19-positive person.
- Has been in contact for at least 15 minutes and closer than 2 metres with COVID-19-positive person.
- Has been in contact with body fluids of COVID-19-positive person without personal protection (e.g. has been sneezed or coughed on or touched a used napkin with bare hands).
- Has been in the presence for at least 15 minutes and closer than 2 metres of COVID-19-positive person (e.g. same classroom, hall, venue).

I am a parent and me or my family member has symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat, tiredness. Can my child come to kindergarten?

The parent needs to contact the family doctor who will decide by the symptoms whether it could be considered a COVID-19 case and whether the COVID-19 test should be taken or not. The kindergarten strongly recommends that the child stays at home until the result of the parent's test comes back (it's up to 48 hours). The parent is asked to notify the group teacher about the student's absence.

I am a staff member and my family member (adult or child) has symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat, tiredness. Can I come to work?

Your family member needs to contact the family doctor who will decide on COVID-19 test. The kindergarten strongly recommends that you do not come to work and stay at home until the result of the test comes back.

The symptoms of COVID-19 vary greatly, and in many cases there are no symptoms at all. Medical decisions are made by the family doctor (e.g. is COVID-19 test necessary, interpretation of the symptoms etc). A rule of a thumb - if you or your child feels and/or looks sick, stay at home from school/work and contact the family doctor for further instructions.

Every member of our community can do a lot to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus by being responsible for their own and the other peoples' health. We need and appreciate everybody's contribution and understanding in this.

Useful links

The Estonian Government's crisis management website: <https://www.kriis.ee/en>

The Estonian Health Board: <https://www.terviseamet.ee/en>

The Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <https://vm.ee/en>

The Estonian National Broadcast: <https://news.err.ee/>