

## COVID-19 and School: Policies and Guidelines

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

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

The Estonian Government and our school aim to avoid full distance learning and teaching. Also, teaching and learning in class must be provided to grades 1 to 6 and to students with special needs as long as possible and to students for whom distance learning is not effective.

**In the school year 2021/2022, there are three possible ways how to attend our school:**

1. **Traditional face-to-face format.**
2. **Distance learning.** This happens in case the Estonian authorities (government, health board) close the schools in Estonia, in Tartu, just our school, or one group/class in the school. The decision to close TIS, one class or group may also be made by the management board of the school. In this case the whole school, class, group etc. will be on distance learning, which is a combination of online lessons and student individual work. The students will follow a specially designed timetable. The students receive tasks via Stuudium (e-diary). The parents, students and teachers stay in contact via the online study platform Stuudium. The students need to be able to use the computer with a camera and microphone (the school has a limited number of computers that can be borrowed) and have access to the internet. The school uses platforms that are familiar to the students (school's e-mails, Stuudium, Google Classroom, Zoom, Google Meet and Hangouts etc).
3. **Homeschooling.** Parents are required to apply to the school for this form of learning. Homeschooling can be applied for a longer period of time, e.g. one semester. The responsibility for achieving the learning outcomes is on the parents, there will be no daily or weekly meetings with the teachers or any video lessons. At the beginning of the homeschooling period, the school will help to set the learning objectives for the period of homeschooling, the student will receive books. According to the Estonian legislation, the school is required to monitor the achievement of the learning objectives. This is done at the student-parent-teacher conferences which will take place once a month. Please contact the principal if you would like to apply for homeschooling for your child.

The school and teachers are not able to provide a type of learning where some students of the same class are at school and some are on distance learning (e.g. joining classes via video conferencing from home) on a daily basis. **In case of a unique situation (e.g. the children in a health risk group), please contact the school to discuss your situation in order to find the best solution to continue with studies.**

### **School and Traveling**

Please follow the restrictions by the Estonian Government and the Estonian Health Board. You can find regularly updated information following this link:

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

For teachers, parents and students, the school strongly recommends not to travel in order to maintain the feeling of security within the school community.

If a student or staff member still needs to travel, we strongly recommend that after returning to Estonia, they stay at home and observe their health for the next 10 days. The students' absence is excused and the school helps to arrange learning remotely. The staff members are strongly recommended not to take a trip, and if this should happen, they are asked to work from home to avoid contact with children and colleagues.

### **The measures to minimize contacts at school**

- Cloakrooms: some students enter the school house from the back of the house, lockers are set up for them in the hall.
- Lunches: the students eat in shifts, only specific grades at the same time.
- Starting time: on some days certain classes or groups start later in order to spread the students.
- Visitors: the parents are not permitted to enter the school house on a daily basis; visitors may enter the school 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).
- Breaks: some grade 1-5 and 6-9 breaks are at different times; long breaks are spent outdoors.

### **Gathering and events at school**

- School events involving the whole community (parents, teachers, students) take place outside.
- Excursions and field trips are organized by grades or specific groups so that it is possible to identify the participants in case a positive COVID-19 case appears.

- The school does not participate in the local events that involve groups of students from other schools.
- The parents' meeting for one specific class takes place in the hall providing enough space between the chairs, outside or virtually.

### **Personal protection equipment**

- The school provides personal protection equipment for teachers (masks, gloves). The students who wish to wear a mask, need to bring their own. The school also has a supply of masks for special cases (e.g. a parent needs to visit the school, the student becomes sick during the school day).
- The ventilation system of the school 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 surfaces are disinfected during the school 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 classroom has disinfection supplies.

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

Any staff member and student 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 (confirmed by a PCR-test) within the community, 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 school, the Estonian Health Board will determine persons considered in close contact with a positive case and reach out to the respective families.

The students and teachers who are not considered close contacts (see below) must monitor themselves and can follow the school schedule as usual.

If a student falls ill during the school day, the parents are notified and the student will wait for the parents in the principal's office. The school will provide a protective mask.

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 school and community (siblings in different grades, all grades use the same building) it is highly possible that the whole school 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 school.

### **Who is considered as 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 school or any other public venue:

- Lives in the same household with a 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 a 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 school?**

The parent needs to contact the family doctor who will decide by the symptoms whether the COVID-19 test should be taken or not. The school 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 school excuses the student's absence and helps to organize learning from distance. The parent is asked to notify the class 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 school strongly recommends that you do not come to work and stay at home until the result of the test comes back. If the family member is a child, and the family doctor does not advise a COVID-19 test for the child, the school will help to arrange testing of the staff member at Synlab.

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/>