

Another step back to normal

More schools to partially resume starting 18 May.

The waiting will soon be over for a large number of Hessen school students: starting 18 May, 4th graders and some secondary school, upper secondary school and vocational school (dual education) students can return to school. "This plan is sticking to a course of a gradual opening of schools and a gradual return from of the older students first and then the younger students," explained Minister of Culture, Prof. Dr. Alexander Lorz today in Wiesbaden.

The state government based its decisions on the decisions of the Conference of Ministers of Culture, the ruling of the Hessian Administrative Court on teaching the 4th grade and the experience gained from the written Abitur examinations, said the Minister. "I am pleased to be able to consider another milestone on the long road back to normal school operations. In doing so, we are not only easing the burden on the 520,000 students affected by this measure, but also on many parents, some of which had to home-school their children while taking care of their professional lives for weeks now."

When announcing the partial opening of the schools for certain grades, Lorz stressed the importance of complying with the hygiene regulations of the health authorities and the necessary distance rules. "These requirements will continue to apply unchanged, because starting 18 May there will be significantly more people on the school grounds, in the entrance area and in the corridors than is the case now." Compliance will not always be easy, especially among younger students. "But I am sure that our schools will be well prepared for this."

Next step planned for 2 June

As of 2 June, grades 1-3 as well as 'Vorschulklassen' and intensive classes at primary schools will be allowed to resume operations to a limited extent, as will several vocational schools. The resumption of the 'Förderschulen' is based on the timelines of primary and secondary schools.

The plan of the Ministry of Culture is subject to the decisions of the conference of the heads of the state governments and the German Chancellor. After the Wiesbaden city government agrees, the schools are to be officially informed of the next steps on Thursday.

The Minister asked for everybody's understanding of these decisions, especially of the students who are not yet allowed back to school. "We need to keep a close eye on the risks of infection. In order to contain the pandemic. It is important, especially in elementary schools, that students do not return to school all at once, but in two steps." This also gives the school leaders the necessary time to develop concepts for the organization of small groups, for the distribution of space, for the planning of the assignments and for the implementation of the hygiene plan.

Even though we are now gradually reopening the schools, one thing is clear: Classes will not be taught in the usual manner, like they were taught before; not for a while. In addition to classroom instruction, learning will still rely heavily on home-schooling this year," concludes Lorz.

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