



Hannover, 30 November 2021

Dear parents and guardians,

It is not entirely surprising, but nevertheless of concern, that COVID-19 infection rates are increasing very rapidly, both nationally and here in Lower Saxony. An end to this development is not yet in sight. This is why I am, once again, writing to you directly today to inform you about the current situation and to ask for your cooperation.

It is our shared goal that your child's (or children's) care and education, as provided by child daycare facilities and childminders, be maintained at the highest possible standard and for as long as possible – even in these special circumstances caused by the pandemic in which, unfortunately, we still find ourselves. Even during these difficult times, we want your child to benefit from their early education, and you to be able to rely on daycare that meets their and your needs. Experience gained over the past year shows just how important it is for our children that daycare services remain open.

What is being done to ensure this?

A hygiene plan is in place at all daycare facilities, describing how the requirements of the German Infection Control Act (IfSG) are specifically implemented at this particular site. These measures ensure that the health of children, staff and parents is protected despite the ongoing pandemic situation.

In drawing up their hygiene plans, daycare facilities can refer to Lower Saxony's General Coronavirus Hygiene Plan (RHP) for Child Daycare, which describes specific measures. These include regular airing of indoor spaces – in some cases augmented by ventilation systems – as well as familiarizing children with hygiene rules in an age-appropriate way, and do's and don'ts for external visitors. Another useful source of information about how to put the requirements into practice is an FAQ list (in German) available on the Ministry's website under 'Aktuelles' (Latest News).

Among the recommended hygiene measures is mass random testing of nursery-age children in child daycare facilities and childminding settings. These are extremely important in order to break chains of infection at an early stage and contain this phase of the pandemic, partly because vaccinations are not yet available to children under the age of 12.

So that all nursery-age children can undergo regular random testing, the state government has – since September 2021 – been making rapid antigen tests available **for all children aged 3 and above**: specifically, **three tests per week**. In order that all those involved are better protected against infection, it is important to reach as many children as possible and that you, the parents or guardians, get on board with this mass random testing. Testing should take place at home before the child attends daycare, so that any infections are identified before they arrive at the daycare setting.

At present, although testing of school-age children is required, testing of preschool children is not mandatory. I would, however, like to encourage you to test your child – at home, prior to attending daycare – on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, as is also the case with children who attend school. The tests for mass random testing, which are paid for by the federal-state authorities, are intended to effectively protect the children in a daycare group, the staff there and, not least, the children's families. However, this can only happen for a given daycare facility if all the parents support this testing strategy, and if consistent use is made of the tests the state has provided.

I would like to thank you sincerely for your cooperation, and to wish you and your families all the very best at this challenging time. Do stay well and healthy!

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Prof. Dr. Dirk T. ...". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.