



Brussels, 20th October 2020

Communication: Continued Measures for European Schools in Brussels

Dear Pupils, Colleagues and Parents,

As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to evolve, the Directors of the European Schools in Brussels continue to monitor the situation and take decisions in the best interest of their school communities. In most Member States, it is acknowledged that in situ teaching needs to be a target for all schools. It needs to be clearly stated and understood, that face to face teaching is the best form of learning for our pupils. In Belgium, at this point in time, the decision is to have in situ teaching with preventive measures in place to protect the school community.

The decision of the four European Schools in Brussels is to continue with in situ teaching when pupils are back from the All Saints Holidays. The main preventive measures of mask wearing, hand hygiene and social distancing need to continue being emphasized and put in practice. While the four schools will keep on communicating among themselves and will at times take decisions together, the reality of each school also needs to be taken into consideration. The first 7 weeks of school have shown that while there are similar experiences, there are also differences between each of the schools, such as the number of positive cases, the number of vulnerable staff and the physical space available in the school.

The Directors of the Brussels European Schools will continue to take decisions together where necessary and beneficial, but will also take individual decisions regarding their own schools where the need arises. Decisions will not be based on popular opinion of stakeholders but on analysis of the situation in Brussels, of the data of each school in relation to Covid-19 cases and on the needs of the school community.

In this light, and also considering the increase in Covid-19 cases in Belgium and the Brussels area, the Directors propose the following measures as from the 3rd of November, 2020 (when pupils return to school):

1. Suspension of all swimming lessons in the nursery and primary cycle.
2. Suspension of contact sports in the secondary cycle.
3. Obligatory mask wearing at all times for all adults in the schools and all secondary pupils, at all times.
4. An in situ/online rotation system in the secondary cycle will start as from the 3rd of November, 2020 and will go on for 5 weeks up to the 4th of December, 2020. An ongoing evaluation of this measure will be carried out. The justification of this measure is the following:

- a. Reducing the numbers of pupils in the school.
- b. Pupils will be able to practice and become familiar with the online system for one day a week.
- c. Teachers will also be able to engage with the system that was used successfully in the last months of the last school year.
- d. The school will be able to assess the effect of having a decrease of pupils in situ.
- e. More recreational space will be created for the in-situ students.
- f. Common areas such as canteen, gyms, study halls, libraries, etc. will be less crowded.

5. The in situ/online rotation system will be organised as follows:

- a. All **S6 and S7** pupils will be in-situ for 5 days a week.
- b. From **S1 to S5**, each year group will have 4 days in situ and 1 day online. The day will change each week and so by the end of the 5th week, the pupils would have had each day of the week online. For example, in week 1, s1 could have their online day on a Monday, but in week 2, it would possibly be on a Tuesday and so on.
- c. During online teaching, pupils follow the normal timetable. Lessons will be taught online. All pupils are expected to log on and be present for the lessons. Teachers will be in situ and they will teach from their classrooms, while the pupils in one level will be at home on that day.

6. In the last two and a half weeks of term before the Christmas holidays, that is as from, the 7th of December, 2020, the examinations / B tests for s4 to s7 will need to be organised. The schools will inform the school community later in November, 2020 how these weeks will be arranged.

It has to be clearly indicated and stressed that any of the four schools may opt for different versions of the rotation system in accordance with the reality and situation of the school, at any point in time. The starting point of this next phase will be implemented together, but the evolution of the situation will mean that a Director may decide to make alternative changes for the well-being of our school community.

All measures will be regularly monitored and changes may be made at any point in time as the situation evolves. A final evaluation will be made in December, 2020 so as to plan for the following phase starting in January, 2021.

It is also important for our school communities to note that we have also actively started to discuss possible measures to be taken specifically in the first week back in January, 2021. We are specifically examining the possible imposition of a number of days distance teaching, starting from the 7th of January that would allow us to come back safely and limit as much as possible any further spread of the virus. We are aware that we will need to wait for national measures to be announced for the Christmas period, but as a team of Directors together with the Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools, we are already looking at different possibilities for a safe return to school in January 2021. Further information will be shared with the school community as soon as possible.

All in all, most pupils and colleagues are glad to be back. It is clear that there is concern about the rising numbers of cases in Belgium. We must all remain vigilant and protect each other. However, when one sees the actual number of positive cases in our schools in relation to the past 7-week period and in relation to our school populations, the numbers and situations have been manageable so far. We aim at continuing with this stability. The measures we have put in place are working and we need to continue with an attentive, cooperative and serious approach. It is our aim that with these above-mentioned additional measures that will be implemented as from the 3 of November 2020, we can continue to navigate effectively through this challenging situation.

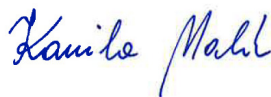
Kind regards



Manuel Bordoy
EEB4



Brian Goggins
EEB1



Kamila Malik
EEB2



Micheline Sciberras
EEB3