

Home learning

Guidelines for parents
and pupils



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[*Lower Saxony Minister for Education*]

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**Dear pupils,
Dear parents and guardians,**

All of us are facing exceptional circumstances during the current crisis. Almost daily, fast-moving developments result in a new situation. We are continuously having to reorient ourselves, rethink and find new ways of doing things. I am most grateful for your willingness to rise to these challenges and to constructively help shape our response.

After weeks of schools being completely closed, the next, cautious step is one of phased reopening. Many questions and concerns are being articulated, all of which we are taking seriously and answering as best we can.

In the coming weeks we will enter a new phase. It will be necessary to organize learning processes and places of learning in a new way. There will be periods where pupils learn at home and periods where they learn at school. Realistically speaking, however, a rapid return to 'business as usual' with normal teaching will not be possible before the summer holidays – and no-one should expect otherwise.

We plan to start preparing final-year pupils for the exams as from 27 April 2020, and thereafter to have the year groups behind them back at school at least on a part-time basis. This plan is merely intended to provide a general orientation. It is provisional and will be modified as required in response to infection patterns or new stipulations. Phase C, in particular, is no more than an idea at present and has been neither formally agreed nor scheduled.



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Phase A Final and transitional year groups 2020				Phase B Final/transitional 2021		Phase C Scenario (not yet agreed)	
	22 Apr.	27 Apr.	4 May	11 May	18 May	End of May – end of June	
Sec. II		13		12		11	
Sec. I		9/10*			9/10	7/8	5/6
Prim.			4		3	2	1

'Home learning' + preparation for phased return by teaching staff and school administrators

*Calendar week 18: only for exam preparation! Pupils in years 9/10 who are not taking final exams in 2020 will not be going back until 18 May.

Dates given are planned starting dates for the stated year groups.

Taking primary schools as an example: Year 4 groups will be starting on 4 May with teaching in 'shifts' as described below. Additionally, Year 3 groups will go back on 18 May, and so on.

With the resumption of in-school lessons, one of the major challenges for pupils will be to maintain social distancing. This will involve organizational changes to previous and familiar aspects of everyday school life. We will have to take the strain off school transport services and ensure that learners keep a safe distance from each other. This is why pupils will be taught in shifts in half-size classes until further notice. Your particular school's administration will inform you about these arrangements on a timely basis.

All year groups not (yet) back at school will be provided with learning plans and work for home learning by their teachers. For families with school-age children, it will therefore be necessary to organize times for learning at home. This cannot, of course, provide an equivalent and full substitute for normal school classes. Parents are not 'substitute teachers', even though they may of course provide their children with ongoing assistance and support as usual.



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School education remains compulsory; this obligation now applies to schoolwork set for home, and our aim is for pupils to strengthen and grow their competencies even under the current conditions.

We have prepared these guidelines to help parents and children organize the home-learning phase and make it as effective and stress-free as possible.

Both now and in the future, we must practise solidarity to meet the challenges we will face in the weeks to come. I am confident that, together, we can achieve this.

Yours sincerely,

Grant Hendrik Tonne

Lower Saxony Minister for Education

Home learning

1. Tips for parents and guardians

All pupils will receive teaching plans and tasks from their teachers to work through and complete in a home-learning setting. This work is compulsory. The following tips and suggestions will help provide a well-organized basis for successfully learning and working at home.

Structure daily activities

Giving the day a well-defined structure helps create a feeling of security in a time when day-to-day life has radically changed. Draw up a written plan for the day with your child and include times for learning, breaks, meals, exercise and media use. A healthy balance between times for focused work and phases of rest and recreation is important for all concerned. Build in routines and rituals that are kept; in this way you can prevent unnecessary daily discussions and the need to keep making new agreements.

Provide an enabling work environment

If possible, your children should have their own workspace in a quiet environment with few distractions. Ensure that all required resources are in place and ready to use.

Help your children to organize their work

Your children should, as far as possible, do the set tasks and work assignments by themselves. A moderate level of support is of course allowed and may help the child to get started or clear up comprehension issues. Encourage your children to get in touch with their teacher if they have difficulties or questions so they can get targeted advice and support. It can also be useful and motivating to make progress visible by ticking off items on a list.

Create a positive atmosphere

In these exceptional circumstances, learning and working at home requires a particularly high level of self-discipline. This makes it all the more important to create a positive atmosphere in which learning can be not only focused but also enjoyable and free from pressure. Too-high expectations and pressure to perform are counterproductive and do not result in better learning outcomes. Instead, what is needed are patience and composure – not forgetting a good dose of humour as well!

A word on performance assessment

No child should experience disadvantages due to learning conditions, family background or the domestic situation. Owing to the differences between home-learning environments, work done in years 1 to 10 will not be assessed. Once school teaching has resumed, however, knowledge acquired by learning at home may be reviewed in the form of tests, learning-objective reviews or oral questioning. Regular and constructive interaction between teaching staff and pupils is bound to motivate your children in their further work and result in good individual learning progress.

Maintaining contact with the school

Your child's teachers are available for questions and individual guidance at specific times.

Resources for digital learning

For all those on the lookout for additional learning material or practice resources, a special platform on an education server for Lower Saxony (*Niedersächsischer Bildungsserver*, NiBiS) currently brings together and makes available a wide range of learning ideas for teaching staff, parents and pupils. At the website address www.lernenzuhause.nibis.de, you can find teaching materials covering all subjects and school levels, as well as lists of links, apps and other resources for home learning.

2. Tips for pupils

The coronavirus crisis has led to massive changes for all of you in your everyday school lives. You are now learning at home, where you are required to work independently through tasks and learning plans given to you by your teachers. Here are some tips to help you succeed.

Create a suitable workspace

Make sure your workspace is in a quiet place and kept nice and tidy. Everything you need for your schoolwork should be in place and ready to use. Try to avoid distractions such as your phone, music, the TV, etc.!

Find a daily rhythm that works for you

A good plan and a regular daily routine will help you stay focused and structured in these challenging circumstances. Make a written plan for the day – ideally with your parents – including times for learning, breaks, meals, exercise and media use. Divide up your work for the week into manageable daily portions and decide where to start. A bonus tip: it's a good idea to complete your least enjoyable assignments first!

Be focused and ambitious in your work

Work steadily through the tasks you have planned to do, and try to minimize distractions. When you've finished a piece of work, tick it off on your to-do list for the day. That way you will always keep track of what you've done and what is still to do.

Don't give up too quickly!

You'll probably find some work easy, but for other tasks you may need more effort. Don't be too impatient! If you get stuck, you can ask your teachers for help. They are available to answer your questions at specific times – take advantage of this. Reward yourself after you've finished your work – you could listen to your favourite music, phone a friend, play a game with your parents or brothers and sisters, or do something else you find enjoyable.