



July 20, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians;

The American International School-Salzburg has been through dramatic change in the past five months. As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, we have been forced to alter our operations and question long-standing procedures at our small international boarding school. This is not unique to us. Educational institutions around the world are grappling with this threat and trying to find the most prudent and responsible policies and actions necessary for meeting our educational mission while provide an optimal environment and effective procedures that will keep our students and staff safe and healthy throughout the coming school year.

Salzburg, Austria has been spared the worst of this tragedy primarily through effective governmental leadership and a very high level of consensus and cooperation among the general populace. However, it is clear that Austria and the world are not done with the COVID-19 threat and that there is a very real possibility that communities, even our own, may face flare-ups and outbreaks for an extended period before effective medical therapy and/or a vaccine is developed, tested and released. This extended pre-vaccine period will likely include our Fall and Winter Trimesters.

From March 10 until the present, AIS-Salzburg has been student-free and our dormitories and classrooms empty. Through the end of the 2019-2020 school year, the teaching faculty, students and parents cooperated exceptionally well in establishing and carrying out an effective online learning situation that ensured positive closure to the 2019-2020 school year. We appreciate the great effort and sacrifice that everyone in our community voluntarily made in order to make this virtual educational experience meaningful. Despite this success, nearly everyone in our community is looking forward to a 'brick-and-mortar' educational experience in the classrooms and dormitories this fall and long for the personal interaction and social synergy that is essential for solid understanding and competent academic preparation. This doesn't, however, relieve the understandably significant concern of many about the uncertainty of the future with its continuing health threats, economic disruption and possible social unrest. The purpose of this letter, then, is to share and explain to you our plans so that an outstanding educational experience can be provided to your children within a framework of guidelines and adjustments that are based on the latest and ongoing reports from health experts and government officials.

I must emphasize here that our planning represents a working model which will likely need to be adjusted given future circumstances, government regulations and requirements, changing health parameters and our evolving experience in dealing with this situation. However, we would also like to assure you that our fundamental mission has not changed and remains the touchstone and criterion for all of our actions and responses. **At AIS-Salzburg, the health, welfare and character of our students is the essential priority unquestionably enhanced by the college-preparatory education we provide our international student body.**

Through the guidelines and policies stated below, we remain committed to ensuring—to the greatest extent possible—an educational experience that is second to none and will enhance and sustain our students now and in their future lives ahead. While this may be a 'different' school year in some respects and perhaps not exactly what one would have wished for, we have the greatest confidence that our staff and students will discover unique ways to overcome the present hardships and challenges while ensuring that the school year will be a positive, challenging and deeply meaningful passage in our lives.

## **AIS-Salzburg Health Parameters, Protocols and Policies**

AIS-Salzburg will establish and follow a rigorous range of health and safety protocols and policies consistent with public health regulations and guidelines here in Salzburg, Austria. We plan to do the following:

- We will apply a 1.5 meter social distancing requirement wherever possible on campus including in the classrooms, dormitories, and social areas. Day students, especially, will need to adhere to these distancing requirements; boarders will be regarded as family household members to health authorities here whereby the distancing is recommended, but not required.
- Floor labeling will be utilized where appropriate for directing and distancing student and staff. Staggering of lunch times may be put into effect to ensure sufficient distancing during dining periods and will depend upon total enrollment numbers. With two dining rooms which have some chairs removed, we may be able to ensure appropriate dining distances without staggering lunch or dinner schedules.
- We will communicate, educate and encourage our community members to practice strong social hygiene practices including regular hand-washing and minimal touching of hands to face. To support this a large number of hand sanitizing stations will be installed throughout the campus and on each of the teachers' desks in the classrooms as well as on the dormitory floors. Teachers and resident staff members will require hand disinfecting and surface cleaning on a regular basis throughout the days and evenings on campus.
- We will increase the frequency and intensity of cleaning protocols throughout the entire school with high touch zones (desktops, door handles, faucet handles, etc.) cleaned and disinfected at least three times daily. Also, cleaning materials will be made available to all students in the dormitories for further disinfecting if desired. All classrooms, offices, dormitory rooms, and other closed rooms will be frequently and sufficiently aired out on a daily basis. All dormitory rooms will be checked for airing each morning. The teachers will be responsible for airing out their classrooms.
- The school's kitchen staff will adhere very closely to all health regulations required by the local health authorities. These are published and updated weekly. All students will be required to sanitize their hands before entering the kitchen at all times. Meal items such as utensils, desserts, soups, salads, etc., will be individually packed in cellophane before distribution in the meal lines.
- All day students will be screened for COVID-19 symptoms before being allowed on campus. Visitors, including parents and guardians, will be limited by the school administration and will also be screened before entry.
- Whenever required (e.g., in public transport) or appropriate due to crowded conditions outside the school, all AIS-Salzburg students will wear masks that cover the nose and mouth. Students should bring a supply of masks with them upon arrival at the school and these must be appropriately in accordance with local health regulations. Particular masking requirements will be communicated regularly to the students and will primarily affect behavior away from the school campus. Masks will not be required on campus by either staff or students in accordance with present regulations and health policies.
- Day students who are ill or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 infection will be asked to remain at home under the care of their parents or guardians and will be asked to remain there until such symptoms disappear (with doctor's notice to the school health coordinator) or a negative test has been carried out and presented to the school administration. 5-day boarding students who exhibit symptoms will be asked to return to their homes as soon as possible, remaining isolated in the school's infirmaries until such time that they can be picked up or depart. Such symptoms will be reported to local health official for possible further action. Boarding students exhibiting suspicious symptoms will be isolated immediately and health officials here in Salzburg contacted for further required action. Such students will

- be cared for in isolation by the school health coordinator appropriately and in accordance with all local health official demands.
- COVID-19 testing will be carried out only upon recommendation and approval of local health authorities.
- All parents and guardians will be required to supply full and detailed health information for their children upon enrollment regarding any aspect of their health which may compromise their immunity (e.g. asthma, diagnosed auto-immune deficiencies, etc). This information is to be fully discussed with the school's health coordinator at the start of the school year and any additional safety and health precautions carried out throughout the school year. All personal health data is protected as confidential by the EU Data Protection Regulations.

### **Academic Classroom Adjustments**

The following policies, protocols and procedures will be in place in all classrooms and other academic facilities utilized for instruction on campus:

- The regular, six-period schedule with physical education on Wednesday mornings will remain in place without adjustment. Students will continue to move from classroom to classroom as required by their daily academic schedule.
- The number of classroom tables and chairs will be reduced to allow proper social distancing during all classes. If necessary, the school administration may split classes into two groups although in most cases this will not be necessary as our average class size is around 7 students with the teacher. Only the larger classrooms (above 35 square meters) will be scheduled with more than 10 students.
- Should a student exhibit suspicious symptoms related to COVID-19, they will be sent by the teacher directly to the school health coordinator for isolation and further action.
- The teachers will have hand disinfectant spray available in each classroom and request that all students disinfect their hands at the start of periods 1, 4 and 5 minimally.
- Students dismissed to use the restrooms will be required to wash their hands and sanitize them before re-entry into the classroom.
- To the extent possible, teachers will maintain appropriate distancing between students during instructional time. If masking is at any point required given the particular activity or event, the teacher will inform the students of this and enforce their proper usage and wear.
- The teaching faculty will post and maintain all appropriate notices and information in their classrooms.
- Teachers will monitor the halls in the area of their classrooms during passing periods to ensure that health procedures and requirements are being followed, providing reminders and reprimands as required.
- The teaching faculty will report any intentional violations of these health and safety policies, protocols and procedures to the school administration.
- All students will be informed of any and all health and safety requirements pertinent to the classroom and instructional setting and any changes to these over time. They will be expected to adhere to these requirements faithfully and regularly.

### **Dormitory Life Adjustments**

The following policies, protocols and procedures will be in place in the school residences for boys and girls; for full-boarders as well as 5-day boarding students:

- To the extent possible, the boarding students will be spread out so that there are no rooms occupied by more than two students. Priority placement of students will follow in accordance with our standard seniority room distribution practices.
- Infirmary rooms will be set aside and equipped separately for both girls and boys and put under the responsibility of the school health coordinator as well as the resident care staff.
- Rooms will be cleaned regularly by the school cleaning staff. Rooms will be aired out, door handles, desk surfaces and bathroom fixtures disinfected daily by the school cleaning staff. Hand sanitizer and liquid soap will be made available and replenished in all dormitory rooms.
- The resident staff will require surface disinfecting (desktops, tabletops, door handles, etc.) each evening at the end of evening study hall.
- Weekend activities will be adjusted given the current health situation. Student should expect many more outdoor activities and those which avoid crowded public areas. Mouth and nose masks will be required on all public transport if utilized by the staff.
- Free time off campus will be restricted given the actual COVID-19 situation and in accordance with any required health policies established by the local authorities. Students must maintain acute awareness of where they are when off campus including avoiding crowded areas and wearing masks whenever required or appropriate. Any boarding student who does not adhere to such regulations will not be allowed free time off campus for a period of time.
- Return to campus before curfew will involve required body temperature testing as well as hand sanitizing before entry on campus.
- Students under the age of 15 (14 and younger) will be allowed free time off campus only under supervision of the school staff members.
- On excursions, athletics trips, etc., all school-wide health precautions and requirements will be in place especially in hotels and on public transport. The school staff will take hand sanitizing equipment and masks to be distributed and utilized during such outings off campus. In accordance with government warnings, such excursions or outings may be cancelled by the school administration if it is felt that the health of our students and staff is potentially compromised.
- During planned ski strips in the winter, the staff will issue clear guidelines for participation and health protection. To the extent possible, crowds of skiers in lift lines as well as crowded lifts and gondolas that include non-school community members is to be avoided. Given the situation at that time, the school administration will decide if and under what conditions such ski outings will take place.
- Any room change request agreed to by the school administration will require a deep cleaning of all furnishings, floors, and bed ware in both rooms by the school's cleaning staff.
- Students will not be required to wear masks during free time on campus but are expected to maintain appropriate social distancing when possible.
- Clothes washing and drying will be carried out by the school's cleaning staff and it is expected that all students will turn in all worn clothing on a weekly basis. Physical education uniforms will be turned in immediately after physical education class for cleaning, drying and redistribution.
- During breakfast and dinner, all boarders are expected to keep appropriate social distancing in the dining areas and the outdoor dining area.
- Boarders are requested to immediately desist with any behavior that is in violation of these general health requirements.
- Information will be posted throughout the school dormitories and consistently updated. The resident staff will meet with the student body (male and female boarders separately and in an appropriate setting) on a weekly basis whereby any health information will be updated and discussed for understanding.

## Ongoing Updates

As indicated earlier in this letter, we much emphasize that this is a preliminary model and may be subject to change based on government regulations, changing health parameters and or evolving experience with this situation. The school administration will issue communications to all community members on an ongoing basis to help ensure that all are informed and questions can be responded to. It is to be understood that all of these precautions have the school community's health and well-being as their focus and that individuals who are not in agreement may not maintain their membership in the community. For the sake of all—especially the weakest or most susceptible in our community—it is imperative that agreement and cooperation be maintained for as long as this situation is at hand.

## Thank You!

We thank you for your patience, flexibility, cooperation and compassion during this difficult and unprecedented period. We are immensely proud of the AIS-Salzburg community and their ability to do the best job possible toward the better education and preparation of our students. We realize that this is a lot of information to digest, so we encourage you to contact us with further questions or concerns at any point in the coming weeks before the school year begins. Please do not hesitate to call us at +43 662 824617 during weekly office hours, or send your thoughts and questions to our school email address at [office@ais-salzburg.at](mailto:office@ais-salzburg.at)

Attached to this letter, please find a AIS-Salzburg Corona Pledge which is to be signed by all of our students and their parents or guardians. These can be returned by fax or email attachment at any time or deposited in the front office at the start of the school year.

Sincerely,



Paul McLean  
Headmaster