



Corona Update
for the
2021-2022 School Year

January 14, 2022

Dear AIS-Salzburg Community Members;

Here is the latest information on the Corona situation here in Austria and further, relevant information.

I. Omicron

Omicron, as expected, has set off a massive infection wave that is just now getting started across Austria. Yesterday, January 12, 2022, we witnessed the highest number of positive infections recorded in Austria since the start of the pandemic two years ago (nearly 17,000 in 24 hours). Today, the numbers have gone down a bit, but remain over 15,000. Because of these numbers, the 7-day incidence rate has increased dramatically this past week.

1. 7-Day incidence rate nationwide (incidents of infections over seven days per 100,000 pop.)

Thursday, January 13, 2022:	1,022.6
Wednesday, January 12, 2022:	924.6
Tuesday, January 11, 2022:	849.8
Monday, January 10, 2022:	776.0
Sunday, January 9, 2022:	700.9

2. 7-Day incidence rate in Salzburg Province

Thursday, January 13, 2022:	1,904.7
Wednesday, January 12, 2022:	1,769.5
Tuesday, January 11, 2022:	1,604.8
Monday, January 10, 2022:	1,526.6
Sunday, January 9, 2022:	1,442.1

3. Hospitalizations nationwide

Non-ICU patients hospitalized with Covid-19	46% of available beds
ICU patients hospitalized with Covid-19	11% of available beds

4. Hospitalizations in Salzburg Province

Non-ICU patients hospitalized with Covid-19	66% of available beds
ICU patients hospitalized with Covid-19	11% of available beds

Currently, Salzburg Province has the highest 7-day incidence rate in all of Austria. The highest rate in Salzburg Province is presently in Pongau where the present 7-day incidence rate is 3,645.3.

II. Latest Government Guidelines/Restrictions/Directives

In response to these very high numbers, the Austrian government has not yet mentioned lockdowns. Instead, they have altered the focus on primary triggering factors that may need to be responded to with further restrictions. These now have more to do with the total number of patients in hospitals altogether rather than the number of ICU beds occupied at any given time.

There also seems to be a growing level of confidence concerning the relatively light effects of the Omicron variant compared with the older Delta mutation. A very high percentage of those infected experience very light or no symptoms, provided they have been recently vaccinated. Those who are not vaccinated have a 70% higher chance of experiencing serious symptoms and illness.

Most recently, the UK has reported a significant and sharp drop in the numbers of infections most recently, giving cause to hope that this wave—although significantly dramatic—may wear itself out more quickly than others in the past, without the enforcement of lockdowns.

III. Schools and Health-Safety Measures

All Austrian public schools reopened this past Monday, just as AIS-Salzburg did. As mentioned previously, Austrian schools are required to carry out testing three times weekly, including two PCR tests on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Previously, three tests were carried out whereby two were the less-reliable antigen tests alongside one PCR test that was sent to the lab for analysis. Here, we are carrying out the government's requirements to the letter, but we are also testing all non-resident staff members and students on a daily basis. Our thinking is that since the Omicron variant is highly infectious days before any symptoms develop, our best chances of detecting it would be regular testing. Since we have plenty of antigen tests, we are utilizing these as efficiently as we can to try and catch any infections before they are spread to the resident staff and students.

Unfortunately, the government's program of testing nationwide ran into some difficulties yesterday when the analysis of PCR tests resulted in many false reports of negative infection across the country. This affected us in that one boarding student was positively tested with an antigen test earlier this week and we were awaiting the results of the PCR test to confirm this. On Thursday, the results of Wednesday's PCR test claimed that everyone in the school, including this student, were negative. This morning (Friday, January 14, 2022), we read in the paper of the false results that had been reported and discovered through further antigen and PCR testing that the individual was, indeed, positive. We hope that the labs responsible for analysis of these tests discover and fix the problem(s) in the very near future.

IV. Moving Ahead

We remain closely connected with the provincial and national authorities and trust that this will continue to help us navigate successfully through the coming weeks. We will continue with testing, distancing and risk analysis for any and all programming questions and stay on the safe side if at all possible.

However, we are also planning on a situation in which the present spike in infections will begin to fade and we can then initiate more and more of our regular programming including making up excursions, going on ski trips and getting back to competitive sports competitions within the Danube Valley Athletic Conference. Most of us remain confident that the situation will allow this return to promised programming in the near future to the satisfaction and enjoyment of our community.

At present, 32 students remain at home and are joining us online, provided they live in a time zone that allows this. A number of students will be returning to the dormitories this coming weekend and most will have returned by the end of next week. The mixture of high infectiousness but mild symptoms for those vaccinated, seems to give us some hope for a return to an improved situation in the next three weeks.

Lastly, we are continuing with vaccinations for those who qualify for boosters and can arrange these through Mr. Suttman, the health coordinator. We will, of course, seek parental permission before making and final arrangements in this direction and trust, as well, that you will let us know if you have any particular questions or concerns.

V. Conclusion

We are appropriately keeping our heads low at present, which we will continue to do until the threat to the health of our community is lowered or eventually passes. With your support and your assistance, we believe that we can meet this challenge with rational, prudent care while planning for a return to a better and safer environment for our programming in the near future.

We thank you again for your support.

Yours,



Paul McLean
Headmaster