



## **SARS-CoV-2 Strategy at AIS-Salzburg**

***2022-2023 School Year***

*Updated: July, 2022*

As much as the world would like to put this crisis behind us, it is necessarily prudent that the American International School-Salzburg administration and staff maintain and continue an appropriate strategy with response to this continuing pandemic health threat which takes into account the latest scientific/medical data and Austrian governmental requirements. As our AIS-Salzburg Child Protection Policy and Procedures make very clear, it is of the highest priority that we maintain standards of health protection at our international boarding school that are based upon with the latest information and data available—despite the rapidly-changing nature of this health threat to our community.

AIS-Salzburg operates within the parameters established by Austrian law as a private educational institution and, therefore, must follow requirements of the authorities here. We are not, however, an Austrian public school and our institution differs not only in the curricular programming offered; much of our school's extracurricular and organizational structures are quite different as well. The administration, therefore, must both meet our legal responsibilities fully in accordance with Austrian laws and regulations, but also adapt further measures which address our particular and unique context.

This strategy represents an attempt to provide a framework for effective action in defense of our community from the threat to health and wellbeing that the SARS-CoV-2 virus represents as well as an adequately flexible guide that should provide some clarity in answering many 'what if...?' questions. This flexibility is necessary given the lack of predictability associated with this ongoing health crisis.

The AIS-Salzburg strategy, represented below, begins with the overriding, broad goals and objectives that should guide all of our thinking and action during the coming school year. Following this, government measures for schools throughout Austria—to the extent they are presently known—will be presented in translated form followed by any adjustments or adaptations that need to be considered and implemented given our particular context. Finally, this strategy paper will consider many of the conditional scenarios that may well be experienced this year, providing some guidance in addressing them as effectively as possible and with detailed procedures that are thought to be most expedient at this time. These will include measures to be implemented at the start of the school year as well as measures that may need to be implemented at a later date should the situation change for the worse.

This strategy may well undergo changes and further alteration dependent upon how the situation develops in the coming months and how the government and health authorities respond to these changes. Therefore, this strategy cannot provide more than a framework that will need further detail added as we proceed through the school year. The administration and the Corona Crisis Team at AIS-Salzburg will stay attuned to any and all announcements, directives or requirements communicated by officials, keeping a steady and objective eye on the way in which our community is affected by these, drawing reasonable conclusions about how best to implement them in order to meet our educational objectives and mission to the greatest extent while protecting and safeguarding all individuals at our school in their physical health.

## I. Goals and Objectives

As an international secondary boarding school with over 85% of our students residing on campus, AIS-Salzburg has to identify clear goals and objectives that are to be kept in mind by all staff members at the school, given the serious consequences to health represented by this viral pandemic. These goals and objectives need to be understood by all and supported throughout the school year with a very high level of agreement. Only by maintaining a clear and rational eye on these targets, can we effectively apply the best measures and the right actions to any and all possible situations we may encounter.

1. The AIS-Salzburg staff will endeavor to keep all members of our community safe and protected from the health threat represented by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Particularly, our full-and five-day boarders—dependent upon us directly as guarantors of their health and wellbeing—will be assured of our prudent, rational, responsible and professional care; 24-hours a day, seven days a week, for as long as this threat persists. Any and all measures enacted will be done so only after adequate consideration, communication and the establishment of effective procedures.
2. The AIS-Salzburg administration and staff will keep abreast of all government requirements and official epidemiological recommendations and responsibly adopt and adapt these within our unique boarding-school context and environment.
3. The AIS-Salzburg administration will attempt, to the extent possible and allowed by legislation, to maintain all planned programming in order to provide our students with a well-rounded, comprehensive educational experience which includes intellectual, social and personal development concordant with our stated mission and beliefs.
4. The AIS-Salzburg administration will provide adequate and timely communication with all members of the community on a consistent basis, realizing that our community stretches around the world and that many parents and guardians may not be very well-informed as to the particular health-threat situation here in Salzburg, Austria. This communication is to include the means to express concerns and commentary from all members of our community. In the case of direct health threat, the school administration will act swiftly and effectively to limit the possible further negative affects.
5. The AIS-Salzburg administration and staff will continue to see our role in this pandemic as requiring a very high and consistent level of leadership within the community and exemplary behavior and habits with regard to recommended or legislated health protection requirements and recommendations.
6. The AIS-Salzburg administration will rely upon the experiences of the past 28 months and use these to assess conditions and make predictions about what measures may be necessary for the future. Particularly, our understanding of and experience with adolescents in an international boarding-school setting will continue to inform our considerations as to how we can best establish conditions that will protect our community's health.

## II. Present Requirements and Government Measures

At the present time (Summer, 2022), the government and health officials are discussing possible actions to be taken to protect the health of young people in educational institutions in Austria. Due to the variety of potential scenarios, only general recommendations are possible at this time. Much depends upon how the situation, in terms of positive infections and hospitalizations, develop over the next two months. However, the administration has indication that the following measures will likely be put into effect as of the commencement of instruction this September, and that further health-protection measures and possible restrictions *may* be implemented dependent upon the particular infection levels locally and nationwide:

1) A **security phase** at the start of the school year (three weeks minimum) whereby:

There will be a security phase at the start of the present school year which will likely last between two and three weeks. During this security phase, all schools in Austria will be required to institute Covid-19 testing measures for all students and staff members starting the school year.

2) A **security concept** will be in effect, whereby:

1. Data analysis of sewage water will support an early-warning system to identify regions and areas with a higher infection risk and will be utilized by officials to determine further preventative measures in schools.
2. Antigen and PCR tests will be delivered to all schools by the state. The PCR tests will be administered weekly and collected by officials and taken to a local lab for analysis. Schools will then be

informed of PCR testing results the following day. Antigen tests will be administered more regularly; at least twice or three times weekly.

3. Students as of age 12 will continue to be offered the opportunity to become vaccinated free of charge and schools are to assist such students administratively and logistically. Parental consent will continue to be required.
4. Regular ventilation of classrooms and other indoor facilities in schools will be ongoing. In rooms where effective ventilation is not possible, air filtering devices should be utilized. The government will assist in the procurement of these devices.
5. A **health-risk scale** will be utilized to determine if further measures are required in specific schools, towns, areas or regions across Austria. This scale will be based upon the local 7-day incidence rate as well as other factors such as cluster analysis, hospitalization rates, contact-tracing success, and vaccination rates within the local population.

**Low risk** - as defined by health officials reviewing up-to-date information and data:

- Students will be tested with antigen tests regularly or at discretion of the school administration
- Teacher-parent conferencing allowed (with 3G rules applied and proper masking).
- Conferences and meetings with non-school personnel are allowed.
- School activities, trips, outings, including overnight activities or trips may take place.
- Instructional programs that include external personnel or cooperation with other schools/institutions are allowed (with 3G rules applied and proper masking).
- School classrooms may be used for alternative purposes.
- Dormitory personnel are to ensure that resident students represent a minimal epidemiological threat to each other.

**Medium risk** - a growing threat is recognized by health officials reviewing up-to-date information and data:

- Regular antigen and PCR testing in all schools for all students and staff members
- Students and staff members should be masked outside of classrooms in all other indoor school facilities.
- Teacher-parent conferencing allowed (with 3G rules applied and proper masking).
- Conferences and meetings with non-school personnel are allowed (with 3G rules applied and proper masking).
- School activities, trips, outings, including overnight activities or trips may take place provided proper risk analysis has proven minimal risk (with continuation of hygienic measures off campus as well as possible self-testing during trip or outing).
- Instructional programs that include external personnel or cooperation with other schools/institutions are allowed (with 3G rules applied and proper masking).
- Non-vaccinated resident students must produce a negative antigen or PCR test upon arrival.
- School classrooms may be used for alternative purposes provided contact between groups and individuals is avoidable.

**High or very high risk** - health officials recognize an immediate risk to hospital and other health-care facilities:

- Regular antigen and PCR testing in all schools for all students and staff members
- Masks must be worn in all indoor areas.
- Teacher-parent conferencing must be online unless unavoidable, whereby the 3G rules must be applied.
- Conferences and meetings with non-school personnel must be online.
- School activities, sports competitions, trips, outings, including overnight activities or trips are postponed.
- Instructional programs that include external personnel or cooperation with other schools/institutions are not allowed.
- Non-resident dormitory staff need to wear masks at all times on the dormitory floors.

## **Other Possible Requirements and Government Measures**

A wide variety of possible national or local restrictions or requirements may be considered at any time by government and health officials, depending upon the severity of the outbreak and the analysis of critical data. These may include any of the following or further requirements of which we are unaware at this time:

1. entrance restrictions including masking, antigen testing and/or proof of vaccination or recent recovery for all non-school personnel.

2. mandatory vaccinations and booster vaccinations (with approved vaccine) for all school staff/personnel
3. mandatory vaccinations for all resident students
4. provision of hybrid/online instruction for students who remain at home due to infection and/or threat of infection
5. school closures and online instruction maintained
6. other

All school administrations are to ensure that a SARS-CoV-2 prevention concept is in place in schools and that this includes:

- a ventilation concept for all school facilities
- rules for the regulation of passing periods, breaks, free time and the implementation of proper markings
- coordinated prevention measures between the school and food service personnel
- cleaning concept which ensures proper hygienic conditions
- an emergency plan for the use of further facilities and/or external facilities
- contacts for emergencies
- ensure that all members of the school community are aware of all hygiene measures in place through signage, checklists and direct instruction/communication
- the procurement of necessary materials (masks, disinfectant dispensers, etc.)
- documentation necessary to carry out effective contact tracing in the event of a positive infection are available and include:
  - a) up-to-date email addresses and telephone numbers for all students and their parents/guardians as well as all school personnel.
  - b) seating plans for all classrooms and courses.
  - c) programming schedules including master scheduling detailing regular classroom/facilities use.
  - d) daily attendance records of students and staff members.
- documentation of active risk assessments carried out previous to events, trips, outings, etc., as of health-risk level 2
- communication that helps ensure that all community members are aware of all measures and are regularly updated on these
- a procedure for addressing the advent of a positive infection in the school dormitories or classrooms

### **Government Requirements for Physical Education and Sports Events**

Physical education and sports events are to be carried forward as a part of regular programming. These are to take place outdoors whenever possible and if indoors, proper ventilation considerations must be made.

At health-risk levels 2 and 3, physical education and sports should take place outdoors if possible. If indoors, distancing of one meter (minimally) between students should be implemented at all times. Minimum-contact sports or physical education activities are allowed if the length of physical contact is minimal and occasional. Sports or physical education activities that involved long-lasting physical contact are to be cancelled, although training and practice for such sports can take place if no contact is entailed (individual training with distancing).

Hygiene measures and distancing in changing rooms is to be implemented and in effect at all times.

### **Risk Analysis** (as of health-risk level 2 for school activities)

Risk analyses must include the following considerations:

1. identify all possible risks given the nature of the event, activity, etc.
2. identify the likelihood of any of these risks being realized
3. identify the consequences likely to be encountered if the risk is realized
4. measures intended to minimize the risk(s) and their consequences if realized
5. discussion determines if the activity takes place as planned, is adjusted or altered, or is not carried out

All school personnel must bear in mind that the risk analysis process may change dramatically with the changing epidemiological situation at hand.

## Checklist for Multi-Day (Overnight) Activities

Multi-day activities (weekend, overnight trips) are allowed only at health-risk levels **Low** and **Medium**. They are disallowed at health-risk level **High**.

### Checklist for Multi-Day Activities in Austria:

#### A. Planning Process:

- Serious consideration of any and all health risks is to be accepted by all involved.
- Voluntary agreement to carry out such activities is evident within all personnel involved in the activity.
- Discipline/behavioral requirements are established for everyone involved.
- Possible cancellation costs are identified.

#### B. At Destination:

- All hygiene measures are to be in place and maintained throughout the activity.
- All hygiene measures are in place with reference to accommodations and transport vehicles.
- Contacts necessary to communicate a positive infection are immediately available.
- An emergency plan has been worked out which includes considerations of a possible cancellation of the activity if necessary.

### Checklist for Multi-Day Activities Outside of Austria:

#### A. Planning Process

- Serious consideration of any and all health risks is to be accepted by all involved.
- Voluntary agreement to carry out such activities is evident within all personnel involved in the activity.
- Discipline/behavioral requirements are established for everyone involved.
- Possible cancellation costs are identified.
- If a tour management company is employed, proper considerations concerning cancellation costs, refunds, etc. are clarified.

#### B. At Destination:

- All hygiene measures are to be in place and maintained throughout the activity.
- The travel and border entry requirements are understood and the Corona measures in place at the destination are understood and communicated to all participants.
- All hygiene measures are in place with reference to accommodations and transport vehicles.
- Contacts necessary to communicate a positive infection are immediately available.
- An emergency plan has been worked out which includes considerations of a possible cancellation of the activity if necessary.

## III. Application of Health Protection Measures at AIS-Salzburg

The government regulations presented in section II (above) are applicable to all schools in Austria generally, but they do have certain pre-conceptions inherent in them which are based upon the Austria public school system and its structures. Austrian public schools and programming vary from what AIS-Salzburg programs in the following significant ways:

- A. Austrian schools are structured 4-4-4; four years of primary school, four years of middle school and four years of high school — AIS-Salzburg offers two junior-high years (grades 7 and 8) and four years of high school (grades 9-12).
- B. Austrian schools are divided into classes whereby a group of students will have a home room and remain together in the room (for the most part) throughout the day while the teachers come and go. These classes remain unchanged throughout the eight years of middle and high school in gymnasium programs; to a lesser extent in other school forms. — at AIS-Salzburg, the students move through a daily schedule which invites them to be present in any number of rooms and venues for instruction. Generally, the teachers will have a home room, not the students. At AIS-Salzburg, the classrooms in each student schedule will be in two different buildings with passing periods within which students will pass out of one building and into another for instruction in another classroom.

- C. Austrian schools are overwhelmingly day schools which provide education to students from a particular region although this is rather liberal allowance for families and students to choose which school they wish to attend. Some public gymnasiums and other secondary schools will have entrance requirements so as not to become overwhelmed with student numbers. — AIS-Salzburg enrolls students from around the world upon application and acceptance. There will be 26 nationalities in our 86-member student body in 2021-2022. The parents of boarders remain at home as far away as Tokyo and Mexico City. 20% of our students are day enrollments and the families live in or near Salzburg. Only 50% of our day students are Austrians.
- D. Boarding schools in Austria are always 5-day boarding programs that enroll students who must travel home on Fridays and return for Monday morning instruction. Many secondary schools offer boarding through the auspices of a third parties such as Kolpinghaus or other church-sponsored institutions or organizations. In such cases, the organization, not the school administration, is responsible for the supervision of the boarding students. — AIS-Salzburg enrolls 80% of its students as full, 7-day boarders who live in our facilities on campus and are supervised by school employees in the resident-care staff. These students and resident-staff are registered at the school address as their official residence. Day students and non-resident staff members comprise around 35% of the total school community population.

Given these, and other differences between the Austrian school system and AIS-Salzburg and given the assumptions made or implied within government regulations and health protection measures, it is necessary that we consider what adaptations may need to be made for effective application within our unique context. The following information is to provide you with specific information regarding these and will lead to the last part of this strategy which will detail what measures and restrictions are in place as of the start of the present school year in September. Later changes in the epidemiological situation will require further consideration, adaptations and implementations of further measures or the discontinuation of these.

**Security Phase** (first three weeks of the school year, September 3-23, 2022):

- a. We will carry out testing for all students and staff as required by the Austrian authorities.
- b. Proof of vaccination will be required for entrance and enrollment at the school and checked upon arrival. For those students who were unable to get vaccinated due to local laws or age restrictions, will be noted and free vaccinations will be organized here in Salzburg for them. This can be a first vaccination or a booster vaccination, depending upon the personal information received.
- c. Regular ventilation of all indoor rooms will be carried out regularly.

**A. Low Health-Risk Level:**

All requirements as communicated to the school by government and health officials will be carried out until such requirements are either altered or discontinued.

**B. Medium Health-Risk Level:**

Aside from implementing any and all government and health officials requirements, AIS-Salzburg will consider the implementation of the following supplementary health-protection measures:

- Free time off campus and use of public transport, taxis, etc., may be restricted to reduce contact with the public.
- Daily antigen testing, including weekend antigen testing
- Activities, outings, overnight trips, sports trips, excursions, etc., go as planned provided risk assessment is done with diligence beforehand and have received approval by the administration. Indoor venues may be restricted as destinations because of high risk. The administration will also require masking, etc., dependent upon the activity details. Overnight trips and excursions will be carefully assessed for risk and adjusted, altered in their details or postponed dependent upon location, local health risk and requirements, travel restrictions, etc.
- The dormitories are restricted in access to all except resident-care staff members, cleaning and house staff, and administrators.
- Physical education classes will be held at Rif, preferably outdoors. Contact sports are discontinued except for minimal-contact activities. Hygiene measures are to be in place in changing rooms. Masking is required of all passengers in third-party transportation vehicles.

- 5-day boarders returning from the weekend at home will be tested (antigen) upon entrance to the school and before entrance to the dormitory rooms.

**B. High Health-Risk Level:**

Aside from implementing any and all government and health officials requirements, AIS-Salzburg will consider the implementation of the following supplementary health-protection measures:

- Free time off campus and use of public transport, taxis, etc., may be further restricted to reduce contact with the public.
- All third parties coming to the school for any length of time beyond dropping off a delivery must (a) meet 3G requirements, (b) register their name and contact information upon arrival, and (c) wear an FFP-2 mask for the entire period of time they are on campus. This includes parents and relatives visiting students.
- Masking is required of all staff and students throughout the academic day in all indoor areas, including classrooms, from 07:00 to 17:30 and whenever non-resident students are present at the school. Mask breaks outdoors are to be carried out regularly each 50-minute period. Masking is not required in the school as of 17:30 except for non-resident administrators and non-resident care-staff members on the dormitory floors. The dormitories are restricted in access to all except resident-care staff members, cleaning and house staff, and administrators.
- Day students and non-resident staff members are to dine in Dining Room 1; all residents in Dining Room 2 for breakfast and lunch on weekdays. If day students are present on weekends, they must also dine in Dining Room 1 at that time.
- Meetings, conferencing, etc., with third parties external to the school community must be online/digital or telephonic.
- Off-campus outings, overnight trips, excursions and similar programming is postponed. Other activities held must meet strict requirements after health-risk assessment has been carried out and approval by the administration has been received.
- Physical education classes will be held outdoors at Rif for all students unless the situation is such that it is considered too great a health risk to use these facilities. Physical education classes may be held indoors if it can be assured that only our community members are present in the facilities. Contact sports are discontinued except for minimal-contact activities. Hygiene measures are to be in place in changing rooms. Masking of students and staff members is required in all third-party transportation vehicles. Sports team transport with school vehicles requires masking of all those transported as well. Sports teams do not engage in competitions with other school teams or third parties; such events are postponed if possible.
- 5-day boarders returning from the weekend at home must be tested (antigen) upon entrance to the school and before entrance to the dormitory rooms.

**Other Health-Risk Procedures at AIS-Salzburg**

1. Hygiene materials, markings, postings, etc., are to be put in place and maintained by the office staff and resident-care staff. Teachers are responsible for posting any measures that are in place or are important in understanding any and all health-risk measures implemented or to be implemented in the future.
2. The kitchen staff will coordinate with the office manager concerning any and all health-risk requirements and procedures.
3. The office manager will provide a ventilation and cleaning schedule for the house staff to ensure that the measures they are responsible for are in place and followed on a daily basis.
4. The office manager will collect all of the following materials necessary for efficient contact tracing and make these available to the authority as required:
  1. contact information for all students and staff in the community (telephone and email) including parents.
  2. seating charts for all classes in the master schedule including elective courses
  3. master schedule copies and bell schedule
  4. daily attendance record and the attendance records from the past two weeks
5. The health coordinator and office manager will ensure that all materials (e.g., masks, testing materials, etc.) are provided and properly stored and accounted for.
6. Risk assessment forms are to be made available by the headmaster and the dean of students and available online if possible for all staff members to access.

### ***Positive Infections and Reporting/Quarantine Requirements at AIS-Salzburg***

Quarantining, or isolation requirements for those infected with Covid-19, are presently being debated by government officials. Must will depend upon the proven danger of the viral mutation causing an outbreak and rising numbers. As of the spring of 2022, the government had reduced isolation requirements to five days provided (a) an antigen test was negative, and (b) the infected person is asymptomatic. Something similar may be put into effect this fall, although this is speculative at present.

If government and Austrian health officials institute isolation requirements for those positively infected with Covid-19, the school must meet its legal duties in (a) reporting the positive case, and (b) carrying out the isolation regulations as required. In the case of a positively-infected boarding student, the school administration will provide for all contingencies and logistics for the length of the period of isolation. In the case of a positively-infected day student, the parents will be informed immediately and will assume the responsibility of maintaining health requirements.

It may or may not be possible to offer hybrid/online instruction to the students while in quarantine. It remains to be seen if this will become a requirement of the government. If so, it will be implemented.

Locations for those required to be in isolation may be:

1. in one's dormitory room on campus
2. in an off-campus location
3. in a school health infirmary room

At present, it does not appear that contact persons will be required to quarantine, but will continue to be tested regularly by the school administration and staff.

### ***Hybrid/Online Instruction***

In the previous school year (2021-2022), the Austrian government announced that those parents who wish to have their children remain at home in order to avoid risking an infection, were allowed to do so and that schools would provide hybrid/online instruction for them. If such mandates are enacted during the 2022-2023 school year, the AIS-Salzburg administration will implement this immediately. However, if such a requirement is not announced, hybrid/online instruction will not be offered. The teaching faculty, however, will make a strong effort to keep a student in isolation informed of what transpires in class and utilize the Google Classroom platform to keep them as up-to-date as possible.

## **IV. Conclusions**

If everyone on the AIS-Salzburg staff maintains agreement with the goals and objectives identified, we should be able to go forward this year with effective health protection and infection prevention. Given the level of cooperation experienced over the past two years in our community, we should be confident that this can be re-established and help us protect and safeguard the community optimally. Please remember that this strategy is likely to change, given circumstances, throughout the school year. The administration and Corona Crisis Team will try and keep everyone informed of such changes and adjustments as they become necessary or relevant. In the meantime, this strategy and the actions and responses that comprise it should be understood and strongly supported for the better protection of our community in 2022-2023.

Paul McLean  
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