

17th November 2021

Dear RBC Parents and Guardians,

You may have seen reports that Covid infections numbers are growing quickly in Germany and most parts of Europe.

At yesterday's College Assembly I informed students and staff about the current situation regarding Covid infections in Germany and more particularly in Freiburg. And I have written to them today, with information on new measures. RBC is responding to this rapidly evolving situation, and I think it is right that I brief you.

In Germany, the infection levels and the number of people with serious Covid infections who are in intensive care, continue to climb. At the time of writing the authoritative Robert Koch Institut puts the infection rate in Germany at 312 new infections per 100.000 people in the last 7 days. Die Zeit records 3.190 Covid patients currently in intensive care. According to Die Zeit, 10% of intensive care beds in Freiburg currently are filled with Covid patients, and 21% of intensive care beds are unoccupied. All the reports I have read suggest that this is an infection wave mostly of the unvaccinated, but not exclusively of the unvaccinated.

The Authorities in Land Baden Württemberg have announced new measures to come into effect on the 17th November: <https://stm.baden-wuerttemberg.de/de/service/presse/pressemitteilung/pid/alarmstufe-gilt-voraussichtlich-ab-17-november-2021/> In short, from tomorrow your child, our student, will need to show proof of their Covid vaccinations to enter most places off campus (I have told them it also is wise to carry their ID). If they not vaccinated, they will not be allowed to enter many places (eg. restaurants and museums) but will be allowed to enter some places (eg. shops) with proof of a negative antigen test, or proof that they are under 18 years of age. It appears that the only shops that people may enter without these proofs are basic supplies stores.

These measures are likely to reduce the general risk for a RBC student to become infected inadvertently with Covid-19 when they are off campus.

The new regulations do not affect teaching and learning at RBC. The "CAS" programme continues – but with increased precautions with our partners in line with the new measures.

Statistically, given their age and the fact that almost every student is double vaccinated, RBC students are not at high risk of becoming seriously ill even if they were to catch Covid. Serious illness is not impossible, but unlikely. While this is highly important (!), it is not the only thing to consider.

Looking ahead, RBC will close for the Winter Break, and all students plan to travel home or to a friend's home or to stay with a Host Family. Things could become highly complicated if any student "catches" Covid in December and is not yet free of Covid at the time of our closing (17th/18th December). This gives us a real additional incentive to keep Covid out of RBC especially for the month of December. We need to create an even "safer" period during which time, anyone who might have contracted Covid earlier has time to recover fully (ie. the Health Authorities declaring that they have recovered) before travelling (or, being allowed to travel).

To achieve this "safer" period, the Management Team has decided the following **from the beginning of Block Week (29th November)**:

- Students will no longer be allowed in the city centre, except with the permission of a member of the Management Team for a specific purpose.
- Shopping will be restricted to a nearby shopping centre and to shops to the less densely populated area east of RBC.
- Permission will not be granted for overnight absences.

When students return from the Winter Break, even if they are vaccinated, RBC will require them to have a negative PCR Test undertaken within the previous 72 hours to re-enter campus (by 7pm on Sunday 9th January 2022 – please do follow this arrival limit as the RBC “quarantine” for their student house cannot begin until everyone has returned). The PCR testing requirement is for every student, whether they have stayed in Freiburg or travelled far away. *If a student needs financial assistance to pay for this test, I have invited them to inform Director of Student Life Dr Helen White by the 30th November.* The current thinking is that each Student House will act as a “pod” (ie. the students of that house not mixing with students from other houses) for the first week of the Semester, with online lessons for that week.

I wish to emphasize again my request to Parents, Guardians and Students to respect the published Semester dates. Students may leave campus after 6pm on Friday 17th December (there is a Christmas Dinner that evening, with is not compulsory) or by midday on Saturday 18th December. Students need to return to campus between 10am and 7pm on Sunday 9th January. The link to the Semester dates is: <https://www.uwcrobertboschcollege.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/2021-2022-RBC-Semester-Calendar.pdf> The RBC Staff have worked with extraordinary dedication especially during the Covid pandemic to ensure that the College has been able to remain open throughout the published Semesters, and we need and appreciate your support to allow our closing and re-opening to be as well-structured as possible – putting the least extra burden on them.

After we have re-gathered safely in January and after that first week, we hope that the Covid infection/hospital situation is sufficiently manageable in Freiburg for us to go back to the current general permission for students to go into the city, to enjoy overnight absences etc.

Our current thinking is that the Spring Semester’s Project Week will still happen, but again restricted to Land Baden Württemberg. There is much to do, explore and enjoy in this Land!

Please know that I am highly impressed with the level of responsibility and understanding with which your children, our students have approached the pandemic so far. Now I have had to ask them to continue to be careful, and doubly so from the 29th November onwards. Together, we can do this.

With best wishes,

Laurence Nodder

Rektor

Link to the Robert Koch Institut Covid 19 data:

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/478220a4c454480e823b17327b2bf1d4>

Link to Die Zeit Covid 19 data:

<https://www.zeit.de/wissen/corona-karte-deutschland-aktuelle-zahlen-landkreise>

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