General information on the "lolly test"

Dear Parents,

Immediately after the Easter holidays, the self-tests of Siemens Healthcare GmbH were made available to all schools by the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) so as to be able to detect possible infections with SARS-CoV-2 at an early stage and to limit their spread. The Ministry of Schools and Education is aware that these tests cannot be administered optimally in primary schools and special schools due to their handling.

Therefore, in parallel with the procurement of the self-tests currently available at schools, the Ministry has examined an age-appropriate solution for testing for coronavirus that is suitable for children and different types of schools. In recent months, the University Hospital of Cologne has developed a test procedure for use with children in larger groups. This test procedure is now available for use in primary and special schools.

The federal Coronavirus Pandemic "Emergency Brake" Act of 22 April 2021 has, among other measures to combat the pandemic in schools, stipulated that pupils be tested twice a week. In NRW, two tests per week have already been taking place in schools since 12 April 2021.

The pupils at the primary schools and special schools are therefore tested for coronavirus twice a week in their school groups using a "lolly test", a simple saliva test. The lolly test is easy to use and age-appropriate. It involves the pupils sucking on a swab for 30 seconds. The swabs from all the children in the class are collected in a container and analysed on the same day in an anonymous pool in a laboratory using the PCR method. This method ensures a very reliable test result. In addition, a possible infection in a child can be detected much earlier by a PCR test than by a rapid test, so that the risk of infection is also discovered in good time.

- What happens if a pool test is negative?

The most likely case of a negative pool test in everyday life means that no child in the tested group tested positive for SARS-Cov-2. In this case, the school does **not** get in touch with the parents. Lessons continue in the form you are familiar with.

- What happens if a pool test is positive?

If a positive pool test does occur, it means that at least one person in the pool group has tested positive for SARS-Cov-2. In this case, the laboratory will notify the school. The school immediately informs the parents of the children concerned via the agreed notifications chains. For organisational reasons, however, it may happen that the information is not given until the next day in the morning before school starts. In this case, you will be informed about the further procedure and the next steps in a separate letter from the Head Teacher. In the event that a second test is necessary, your child will receive a separate test kit for this test at home, purely as a precaution. This procedure ensures that an individual child does not have to reveal themselves in the group and is subsequently protected in terms of their personal rights.

At this juncture, we would like to clearly point out that in the event of difficulties arising in post-testing, parents are obliged to contact their family doctors or paediatricians so that they can initiate the necessary steps (including arranging a PCR test, identifying

contact persons). In these circumstances, participation in classroom lessons or the school's support services is only possible again after a negative PCR test has been submitted.

Further information on the lolly test, including explanatory films, can be found on the pages of the education portal: https://www.schulministerium.nrw/lolli-tests

This test, which is easy and quick to use, will help all of us to better contain the incidence of infections and at the same time give you and your children the best possible safety for learning in school. This also opens the way for the pupils and you as parents for a greater degree of reliability and regularity with regard to school attendance.

For further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

With kind regards,