



## Minutes of COVID WG - October 26th, 2021

### Participating

<b>Manuel Bordoy MB</b>	<b>Kristin Dijkstra KD</b>
<b>Isabelle Verwilghen IV</b>	<b>Karim Kettani K2 (excused)</b>
<b>Martin McGrath MMG</b>	<b>Dina Dragomirescu DD</b>
<b>Niina Viima NV</b>	<b>Marianna Cosco MC</b>
<b>Caroline Hulsen CH</b>	<b>Diane Werherth DW</b>
<b>Justine Dauchot JD</b>	<b>Stephanie Buus SB</b>
<b>Laure Nossent LN</b>	<b>Maria Koidu MK</b>
<b>Eva Puttkamer et Sophie Carly</b>	<b>Dan Nicolae DN</b>
<b>Peter Segers PS</b>	<b>Judith Ecker JE</b>
<b>Gilberto Castorini GC</b>	<b>Dijana Ror Boone DRB</b>
<b>Suzanne Patin (OIB)</b>	

### Update on COVID cases

The parents inform the school that the numbers were not up to date on Monday afternoon.

### Quarantine rules

- Great confusion among parents about quarantine rules (European School vs Belgian) and testing, especially with regards to class closures.
- Parents complain that classes get informed too late about clusters. No information about low risk. What will school do to fix this problem? (ex. S1De: school knew about cluster Monday evening, parents were informed about quarantine Tue after school. Students had 1 day to give the virus to others - on the bus, in other courses, in the canteen, in the chill-out room.)

Eva Puttkamer states that the rules from Sciensano have not changed since last week: with two or more cases there's a cluster which leads to the class being closed.

Nurses cannot change the actual rules. Directors can apply stricter rules.

School doctor applies even stricter rules in these cases because of positive asymptomatic students.

Nurses don't understand why parents think it's too late to inform of a cluster.

Nurses need to check the information received for first cases, etc.

On Monday morning, there could be over 80 emails and children in the infirmary that are not feeling well.

Usually, classes are closed the same day.

The important thing is to follow high and low risk but priority information of clusters are to be dealt with first.

Kristin Dijkstra wants to point out to the nurses that those questions were not remarks and the parents understand that the nurses have been overwhelmed. The goal in sharing these parent comments is to emphasise that there is too much work to be done by the limited staff each school has available, not to challenge the professionalism of the people doing the work. Ideally, this group could brainstorm together to come up with some ideas that could alleviate or streamline some of the work for the school medical staff.

Maria Koidu gives an example where students had tested positive on Saturday and since there was no official communication from the school by Monday, some students of the class went to school.

This spreads the virus because students have L2 classes, etc.

If the teacher knows about the cluster, could the teacher tell the parents not to send the other children of the class to school?

Martin McGrath explains that there's no out of hours service for the moment and everyone is working as fast as they can.

He believes that if teachers were given the right to close a class, this would mean chaos because they don't have the medical data.

Should Martin McGrath have received an email (sent to him personally) over the weekend, he could have taken action, but not a teacher.

The nurses explain that they do not work on weekends.

Judith Ecker explains that parents understand that this situation has been going on for a very time. She wants to point out that it's not a criticism.

Figures are going up and the school needs to understand that it's very difficult for families who have vulnerable members to send their children to school.

Couldn't there be a mitigation solution found?

Judith Ecker suggests to hire a medical secretary for the weekends and perhaps evenings. This would allow school to react faster and close classes with several cases.

Eva Puttkamer points out that this situation is ongoing, this virus is here to stay like flu, we as a society have to live with it and we are not in crisis and students get mildly sick or remain asymptomatic.

She informs the parents that no student was hospitalized so far and with 2,200 students it's impossible to deal with messages as they come in because an analysis has to be done and it takes time.

Dan Nicolae who is a doctor and is amazed of the nurses' attitudes.

He believes that as a medical professional, there might be times when they need to work over the weekend.

Manuel Bordoy intervenes and states that school experts don't feel we are in a crisis even medical staff is allowed to have time off over the weekend.

No new jobs can be "invented". It would have to be agreed by the OSGES.

Dina Dragomirescu agrees that there are different interpretation of what COVID is like because we don't know what it is fully.

Ten percent of children could get long COVID.

She believes we should aim at prevention.

Could there be some type of rotation between school staff that someone could check the mailbox during the weekends?

Stephanie Buus writes in the chat: Maybe this is a bit radical, but given the high circulation rates of COVID in our schools and in Brussels at large, would it make sense to remind parents now to keep/allow their child to stay home if their child has ANY cold symptoms right now or are not feeling well? And that getting an excused absence for this is made easier during this period.

This wouldn't stop asymptomatic transmission but it could perhaps slow symptomatic transmission. It might mean more children at home on any given day, of course, which makes things more difficult for teachers and the school.

Still, it might help stop additional circulation of the virus as we enter this Fourth Wave.

Maria Koidu also writes in the chat that in addition, parents of kids who "have a cold" should be reminded to take a Covid test.

### **COVID figures**

- Covid figures have been doubling last week. How can further outbreaks be contained? What is being done to minimise the possibility for a further spreading of the virus in school?
- Which number of infected students would trigger a closure of the school?

Manuel Bordoy states that the schools need to rely on the experts and he will not hesitate to close the school if need be.

These last two weeks, there was quite a significant increase in cases but not as bad as in the other schools.

Judith Ecker disagrees and later writes in the chat that EEB1 Uccle has much lower figures. In the same week that EEB4 had 87 cases, 4 in Mat, 58 in Primary and 25 in Secondary. EEB1 had 24, 0 in Mat, 10 in Primary and 14 in Secondary.

The OSGES will provide a tool to the schools for them to compare their figures.

### **Online teaching**

Is there online teaching for quarantined students or not? How often, if so? Are the rules the same for Primary and Secondary? It seems teachers in Primary have been instructed by the school's IT staff NOT to offer hybrid access to lessons.

Marianna Cosco aimerait que les règles de "online teaching" soient reprises dans le compte-rendu de cette réunion.

#### **Primary rules**

Up until now, online teaching continues to be delivered when the majority of a class are at home. When most of the children are in class, the main group of children is being taught and the parents of the students in quarantine receive information from the teachers (by email).

For Primary teaching, it is difficult for teachers to stay in front of the camera when the vast majority of students is in situ, due to the type of teaching done at EEB4. Teachers do not stand at the front of the classroom and talk at the students, but rather move around the class and much work is done in small groups.

## Secondary rules

Hybrid teaching when students in quarantine.

But teachers are entitled to switch on their camera or not.

If they don't use it, they should send the information to the students via SMS, TEAMS or OneNote.

Isabelle Verwilghen reminds that sick children are not entitled to hybrid teaching. They should concentrate on their recovery. It is also not the intention for students who have "fourche" hours to stay at home and expect to join class online.

## Academic tests

How does the school plan to manage B-Tests but also A tests, given the increasing number of both teachers and students in quarantine in Secondary this Fall? Many parents are worried about lack of coordination linked to academic tests.

Isabelle Verwilghen: B-tests will be rescheduled.

For A-tests, teachers need to be fair and not give such a test to the students in quarantine.

But depending on the student's aptitude in that subject, the teacher could decide for the student to retake the test or not. Each case will be examined individually.

## Face masks during breaks

Is it possible for our children to take off their face masks during their breaks, in the school yard? *(NB, this question was received via the registration form for the Pedagogical meeting on Thursday, before the announcements by the Belgian government about possible changes to mask regulations).*

Manuel Bordoy states that today, there will be a new Comité de concertation and new rules might be issued. The school might still keep the masks for Secondary because of the numbers of cases currently rising.

Parents have different views on mask-wearing.

The school is following the rules allowed by the Belgian authorities but some parents have already had lawyers send letters to school concerning the stricter rules applied by the school.

Stephanie Buus states that Uccle and Ixelles have reinstated masks for P3 and P5.

Four directors of Brussels and Secretary General had a meeting yesterday (they meet each week). In some levels they have imposed mask wearing again because their numbers were higher than ours in the past weeks.

## Food in class

Are secondary students allowed to eat in class? Birthday sweets and sandwiches are used to stay maskless in class. Teachers give contradictory info when asked if it is allowed or not.

Manuel Bordoy is stating that this should not be allowed. Isabelle Verwilghen will remind the teachers that no party is allowed in the classrooms.

Secondary students are only allowed to eat in the canteen or outside.

## **Workload for nurses**

Work load for nurses is unmanageable – what solutions can be found?

Proposal (brainstorming) - have two mailboxes (at Primary and at Secondary level, so 4 in total): one for informing about positivity and one for receiving the documents a person can come back to school. In this case, the triage is done.

Primary should be sent home quicker as there are no masks and it's easier done as no tracking needed. All they need is a table with a cell for each primary class in school, mark the cell when pcr confirmed case is notified and in case of 2 cases, immediately send template text. Some tracking will be needed for L2 but same system can be used.

Peter Segers states that a post has been on the school's website because there's only a temporary staff that has been hired.

A lot of information has been posted on the website.

<https://eeb4.be/covid19-notification> et <https://eeb4.be/covid19-quarantine-testing>

## **Notification of a cluster over the weekend**

If a primary class has more than 2 pcr confirmed cases over the weekend, but no notification before Monday morning: what happens to kids whose parents do not send kids to school on that Monday as they know of more than 2 confirmed cases and are waiting for referral to tests?

As long as there is no official e-mail from the school, parents who work in the Commission still have to go to office 1 day a week and parents who work in the Parliament 2 days a week (while with the official e-mail, the teleworking guidelines allow 100% working from for the duration the under 12 kid is at home).

This question is valid for Secondary students as well.

Check the answers from the first point.

## **Next meeting**

Tuesday, the 16th of November at 09:00.