



**Press release - 396/05/2020**

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## **Minister Gebauer: Instruction resumes in special-needs schools**

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### **Resumption of school operation**

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### **The Ministry of School and Education has issued the following statement:**

Today the Ministry of School and Education announced the opening of special-needs schools, with emphasis on support for mental development (MD) as well as physical and motoric development (PMD). Class at these special-needs schools will resume as of 25 May 2020. This approach was previously coordinated with all parties involved, as well as the school operators.

"The state government aims to make it possible for all students to return to school before the summer holidays," says School and Education Minister Yvonne Gebauer. "This also applies to students who need special educational support in all focus areas, for whom such is medically possible, as they are especially affected by the school closures. It is good that children at special-needs schools for mental development, and physical and motoric development, will be able to return to class as of this coming week."

Many special-needs schools, especially those for students who are preparing to graduate this school year, have already resumed in-person instruction as of 23 April. By commencing classes, the state government wished to harmonise operations with other schools. A majority of special-needs schools and community learning schools were considered during the very first steps to resume instruction. There are various reasons why these special-needs schools did not immediately resume instruction. Adherence to hygiene and distance rules, the provision of special safety materials and the organisation of student transport, especially to MD and PMD special-needs schools, pose particular challenges

for the various parties involved on site. This is why clarification was necessary in order to optimally protect students and faculty.

In order to give all students equal access to school in this extraordinary time, the school supervisory authority and the school operators must coordinate a school-specific plan as part of a responsibility triangle between school leadership at the MD and PMD special-needs schools. The school plan ensures that all students who are medically able to attend school are able to return. An agreement should be made with the parents, and a transparent, binding plan should be drafted that specifies the days when the individual students, or various learning groups, will have in-person instruction until the summer holidays. As a rule these days should fall within the typical full-day operating schedule of the schools. The distance rules, hygiene requirements and anti-infection measures that must be followed at the schools will, like at other schools, lead to the formation of smaller learning groups depending on space and personnel capacities.

"The opening of the last special-needs schools that are still closed was an important priority for the state government. Everyone involved was aware that special-needs schools focusing on mental development as well as physical and motoric development had to take special precautions, and that there had to be discussions among all parties. The regulations that are being passed now offer a very good foundation that allows the students at these special-needs schools to return to class and get support. Personally, I am incredibly happy about this," says Minister Gebauer.

You can find the school message for opening MD and PMD special-needs schools here:

<https://www.schulministerium.nrw.de/docs/bp/Ministerium/Schulverwaltung/Schulmail/Archiv-2020/200519/index.html>

***Please direct enquiries to the press office of the Ministry of School and Education, telephone 0211 5867-3505.***

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