

Dear ISU families,

Welcome to the 2020/2021 school year at the International School of Ulm/Neu-Ulm. We hope that you had a great summer break and your child(ren) is eager to start the new school year. A very special welcome to our new families and the 50 new students who are joining our community. We expect to have 287 students enrolled at ISU by 19 August. There still remain restrictions on travel and some uncertainty, but we may have up to 300 by the end of September.

The 2019/2020 school year has challenged students, parents and teachers to find a new normal for learning, connected us in new ways and required our champions, at times, to champion from afar. What I have most learned through this process is how much I appreciate the expertise our teachers bring to ISU, the ways in which our students continue to work hard to grow, and an appreciation for the little things in life - a smile, a reassuring word or being able to laugh out loud with many people around. What I most appreciate about ISU is how even under circumstances we have never experienced, we are still a learning and caring community.

Normal is such a simple word and it is our goal at ISU to not only find our new normal but to use this time as a learning experience that will forever impact the learning environment of ISU. Our start of the school year will not be "normal," but our learning will not only continue, but it will thrive. We can't wait to move on to the next phase of learning under Covid-19 and we know, all ISU students will be welcomed with metaphoric open arms! Amid uncertainty and change, we cannot just talk about hope, we need to deliver it through trust, hard work and innovation. Everything indicates that this will be a year of much neuroplasticity by all.

Inevitably there are changes with the start of any school year. Your child(ren) will have new classes, new teachers and new classmates. Our principals will communicate more information relevant to their sections. In the meantime, please find some general information below:

- **First Day of School**

The first day of school will be Wednesday 19 August. This will be a full day, with Lower School (LS) dismissal at 15:00 and Middle/Upper School (MS/US) dismissal at 15:30. Please remember on Fridays, school ends at 14:00. EYP 1-3 families will have scheduled individual "meet the teachers" opportunities on 19 August. There will be a staggered schedule for some days afterwards. The EYP teacher will communicate information on this.

- **New faculty members**

The last couple of weeks have been busy and exciting, welcoming new staff and students to the school. I would like to welcome the following faculty and staff to the ISU community:

- Pamela Lichty (USA) - MSUS English
- Suzanne Jennings (Irish) - MSUS Social Studies/History
- Jennifer Oakley (Canada) - MSUS SEN
- Courtney Neethling (South Africa) - MSUS English/EAL/Drama
- Breanna Striker (USA) - Grade 4
- Angelika Schäfer (Germany) - Art/STEAM

I will present more specific information about our new faculty members at our Back to School Nights. This year our Back to School Nights will take place virtually:

- Middle and Upper School (Grades 6-12) Back to School Night will take place on Thursday 27 August at 19:00
- Lower School (EYP 1- Grade 5) Back to School Night will take place on Thursday 3 September at 19:00

More information on the virtual Back to Nights will be communicated later next week. All your children's teacher email addresses can be found on Managebac.

### **COVID-19**

The *Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Unterricht und Kultus* have developed a rooming and hygiene concept for school. Schulpflicht (legal requirement with regard to school attendance) is in operation unless a student has a doctor's notes.

There are some updates from the communication on 3 August:

#### **Hygiene and Cleaning**

- Anyone with symptoms, however mild, will be asked to stay at home;
- Disinfectant stations, gels, and wipes will remain readily available;
- School computers, laptops, tablets, musical instruments and art supplies must be disinfected after every use;
- Students are not to exchange any materials;
- Masks must be washed daily and always stored hygienically when not in use.

#### **Arrival and Dismissal**

- Student arrival: students may arrive from 8:00 and will enter the building as follows:
  - Once routines are established EYP 1-3 will enter through the main door. These teachers will communicate more specific information regarding the first few days.
  - Grade 1 via the main entrance
  - Grades 2 and 4 via the playground entrance
  - Grades 3 and 5 via the side entrance
  - Grades 6-12 via the main entrance
- Upon entering the school students wash their hands and go directly to their homeroom;
- End of day dismissal: students will be exiting the building from the same point they entered in the morning.

#### **In and outside the classroom**

- No assemblies and no cross-grade learning opportunities until at least the end of October;
- Students will be based primarily in one classroom and teachers will be moving;
- Physical distancing of 1.5m is not required in most classrooms (see point below). Nonetheless, a distance between students must be maintained. 1.5m physical distancing is required in all areas outside the classroom;
- Where the classroom space permits 1.5m must be maintained. There will be small group mixed level classes such as EAL or SEN and the physical space permits then a 1.5m physical distance must be maintained;
- Access to the building will be restricted and parent meetings are to take place after 15:45;
- Students from Grades 1-12 are to wear masks when outside the classroom. These masks are to cover the nose and mouth. Face shields on their own will not suffice;

- ASAPs will start in early October and will be confined to the ISU campus and gym;
- No swimming until at least October;
- PE as normal but additional hygiene measures will be in place such as the disinfecting of hands and no activities involved the passing of items with hands;
- Early morning care and after school care will run as normal from 24 August;
- Playground: students are to use designated areas and times only.

### **Bathrooms**

- Bathrooms: The bathrooms in the C wing will continue to be designated for students.
- Students are not to congregate in bathrooms. Only 2 students in a bathroom at any one time and 1.5m distance must be maintained and masks worn.

### **Day and residential trips**

- No competitive sports events are to take place with other external teams during the first semester;
- No residential trips are to take place in the first semester. MSUS Trip Week will be postponed until late in the second semester;
- Day trips are postponed until at least October;
- Large ISU community gatherings will be postponed until further notice;
- Lower School and Middle/Upper School Back to School Nights will be done virtually.

### **Catering**

- Catering will not be available for the first few weeks. We will monitor the situation and communicate accordingly. Therefore, students must bring their own drinks, snacks and lunches. We are looking at the possibility of having catering in place from 7 September;
- The water fountain is off-limits. Bottled water will be available to students in their classroom.

On 6 August, the German government stated that testing will be conducted at the point of entry for everyone arriving from a high-risk area. Coronavirus testing has also been made available to all ISU staff and negative results have been returned.

### **Important Upcoming Events**

Just as the school routines are about to swing quickly back into action, so has our Parent Teacher Group (PTG). On behalf of the PTG, we would like to invite new and returning families to a virtual **Coffee Morning on Thursday 20 August from 8:45-9:45**. Please use the following link to join

<https://meet.google.com/npa-jewe-fnq?hs=122&authuser=0>

The PTG will help to make the transition as smooth as possible for new families. Don't be shy about asking questions and that offer of help extends far beyond the first month of school.

- **IB and IGCSE results**

Usually, at this time of year, I congratulate students on their IB and IGCSE results. Like everything else in 2020, this was different. With the cancellation of written IB exams, the IB used internal assessment grades, predicted grades and large historical data sets. This did not go as envisaged and the results caused consternation around the world. Algorithms and norm distributions took over from education and merit.

The IB results were covered in national and international media, and a number of governments are investigating the authenticity of these grades. As a small, young school, ISU was not immune from this. We lobbied the IB to investigate our case and right this injustice for our students. The appeals process is ongoing; however, despite the debacle surrounding IB results, in no small thanks to the hard work of some staff and the patience and perseverance of families, the vast majority of our 2020 graduates have gained admission to their universities of choice.

We had 18 students receiving IGCE results earlier in the week. 35% of our students achieved A\*-A and 85% achieved A\*-C. While these results compare exceptionally well historically and internationally, there are issues regarding some grade anomalies for students. ISU is in contact with CAIE on this matter.

- **ISU Bus**

Every morning an ISU bus departs the ZoB in Ulm (at the main railway station) at 8:00 from Platform E. The same bus will depart from the Neu-Ulm ZoB (at the Neu-Ulm railway) Platform 8 at 8:07. Several public buses depart Schwabenstrasse shortly after 15:30 for the bus stations.

Throughout the school year, we want to ensure that you are informed and up-to-date on all school events and happenings. Our primary source of information will be our bi-weekly Newsletter and ISU website at [www.is-ulm.de](http://www.is-ulm.de). On our website, you will find information on school activities, our calendar, and upcoming school events. I have attached our Parent and Student Handbook for 2020/2021 that has more detailed information on policies and procedures. Also attached is a copy of the Declaration of Understanding with regard to the Parent and Student Handbook. This needs to be signed and returned to your homeroom teacher by Monday, 31 August. A copy of the 2020/2021 school calendar is also attached.

ISU is a small school with big opportunities, which we know is why many of you entrust us with the education of your children. We pride itself in ensuring that our students have as many, if not more, educational and extra-curricular opportunities as students in much larger international schools. We are committed to maintaining the highest standards so that there will be no shortage of opportunities for your child. We want your child to be appropriately challenged on a daily basis with high-quality instruction and have a wide variety of options to get connected to their school and fellow students. Champions come in all shapes and sizes, and at any point in time. There will be champions every day, but some champions just appear when you need them the most. It is our mission to make sure every child knows that when they need a champion, ISU will provide.

All of us on the ISU team are looking forward to the prospect of working with your child(ren) over the coming year, and I look forward to seeing you in person very soon.

Yours faithfully,

Liam Browne  
Director