

SCHOOL BULLYING POLICY



Violenschool International Primary School

All ‘Openbaar’ primary schools in Hilversum have a common policy endorsed by BOOH in April 2005.

Although there may be minor differences related to school specific situations, the general principles of this policy document apply to all the schools.

This is a translation of the original ‘Pest protocol’, a copy of which is available for parents in both location offices.

All staff of Violenschool, IPS are required to abide by and implement this policy. It is the school’s responsibility to ensure that the students are aware of the Golden Rules that form an essential part of it.

All adults that are part of the school community are also required to adhere to the Golden Rules.

The Golden Rules

- **Everyone has the right to be treated equally**
- **Everyone has the right to be respected as they are**
- **Everyone has the right to be listened to**
- **Everyone has the right to let a teacher know if they are being bullied in any way**

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1. Introduction

Whenever and wherever bullying occurs it is always a significant problem. Bullying has a very negative effect on the victim, and also on the bully. It is a serious issue that has to be addressed by all concerned.

This policy document is for the prevention or dealing with of any issues that could be regarded as bullying. The multi-cultural nature of our school brings with it situations where varying interpretations of what is bullying can play an important role. It is therefore essential that the whole school community reacts appropriately to any incidents that are interpreted as bullying.

A policy document will not ensure that bullying never occurs. This document is intended to provide:

- clear guidelines of expectations regarding behaviour for all members of our the IPS community

If bullying does occur:-

- an outline of suggestions for students
- an outline of suggestions for parents
- guidelines on procedures for staff and other adults working with students in our school

The basis for the policy is the application of the 'Golden Rules'. These apply to all children and adults within our school community.

The Golden Rules

In the Violenschool International Primary School:

- Everyone has the right to be treated equally
- Everyone has the right to be respected as they are
- Everyone has the right to be listened to
- Everyone has the right to let a teacher know if they are being bullied in any way

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2. The Golden Rules

In the Violenschool International Primary School:

a) Everyone has the right to be treated equally

No-one is made fun of or called names for any reason whatsoever, in particular because of:

- Appearance (e.g. clothes, glasses, physical appearance, skin colour . .)
- Nationality (we are all internationals in an international environment)
- Other visible or audible characteristics (e.g. stuttering, squint, learning difficulties)
- Home situation (e.g. single parent family, unemployed parent(s), divorce situation)

b) Everyone has the right to be respected as they are

In addition to not verbally abusing or making fun of each other we also follow a number of rules

- We do not physically touch anyone that does not want to be touched. This includes tripping, kicking, hitting and fighting
- We do not touch other people's possessions without permission and never damage them in any way
- We are open to letting everyone join in a group
- We do not use offensive or bad language or inappropriate nicknames

c) Everyone has the right to be listened to

When someone asks you to do something or to stop doing something you listen to them.

d) Everyone has the right to let a teacher know if they are being bullied in any way.

We solve problems with each other by talking, listening and, whenever necessary, going to a teacher or adult supervisor.

If you have the feeling that you are being bullied we expect you to tell your teacher about this. If you feel more comfortable talking to a different teacher about this then you should do so.

Small cases of teasing can be upsetting and you may not want to talk to a teacher about them. However, if anyone is not keeping to any of the rules mentioned above then you have to report that to a teacher or adult in the school. They will then make sure that action is taken to stop and teasing or bullying. This is also the case for bullying that happens after school time because our rules apply in the class, in the playground, during, before & after school time and on the way to or from school.

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3. The students - What you can do? - Talk about it

If you think your class teacher can not fully understand your problem then you should go to another teacher that you feel you can talk to.

Maybe you think 'How can I do that? There are always other children around.'

The answer is: Make an appointment.

This sounds difficult but you just go to the teacher and say you want to talk to them alone. You do not have to say what you want to talk about. The teacher will tell you when the best time will be. Making an appointment with your own or another teacher has many advantages:

- No-one else will be listening
- The teacher will be able to give all their attention to you
- You can prepare what you want to say before you meet

If you think that the idea of a private meeting with a teacher makes you feel uncomfortable you can always take someone with you - a friend that has never been involved with the bullying or your father or mother.

If you have talked with a different teacher to your own, he/she will go with you to your class teacher to help you explain the problem. Your own teacher has to know in order to be able to help.

When everything has been discussed, a plan will need to be made to make sure the bullying stops. You will be involved in making this plan. It is always important to talk with your parents about the problem and the plan for dealing with it. The teacher can help you with this if you want.

Sometimes it is better to talk with your parents first before talking about it with a teacher.

They may decide it is better for them to talk to a teacher separately. They might make an appointment for you to talk with the teacher. They can also take you with them and help you talk about the problem. You are the one who decides how it happens.

After you have talked about the problem, a lot still has to happen. It will probably need to be discussed with the whole class. Do not worry, this is normal. After this, it should not be possible for you to be bullied secretly because the teacher knows all about the situation. Sanctions will need to be agreed for students who carry on with any bullying. There are enough children in the class who do not agree with bullying but do not dare to do anything about it. The teacher can tell them that it is expected that they tell them if they know that bullying is going on. This is NOT telling tales!

In particular, the teacher will talk with the child or children who have been responsible for the bullying. This is very important because we need to know why this has happened. Maybe they are unhappy in school or in the class and this is why they have become involved in bullying. Maybe they have been bullied themselves in the past and are now reacting to this. It is even possible that some children become bullies because they are afraid of becoming bullied themselves. If we can talk about the reasons that children bully there is a good chance that it will happen less.

IN SHORT:

Everyone needs to know that bullying is always taken seriously and is unacceptable behaviour. Bullies will always be dealt with and sanctions will be taken. Only if everyone is aware of this is there a chance of it stopping.

THEREFORE:

Ask for help whenever you need it. We do not consider this stupid, childish or a waste of time. We will take you seriously and will be there to help you.

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4. Parents: What can you do?

Finding out that your son or daughter is the victim of bullying is an upsetting moment. If you discover that this is, or might be, the case, it is important that you react to the signals that accompany bullying. Bullying is a serious problem that needs to be appropriately addressed as quickly as possible.

It is possible that the school is not aware of the bullying. Since bullying usually happens secretly, victims of it often do not report it to a teacher. We can not stress how important it is that you make us aware of any bullying. Openness helps in clarifying an issue and enables us to take the necessary steps in dealing with it.

We realise that it can be a sensitive matter for parents if your child is being bullied or is involved in bullying. However, it is of great importance that that you contact us if you think either is the case. Similarly, we will contact you whenever we think this is the case. Only then can your child's teacher deal with the situation appropriately. It may be desirable on your part to meet with Wilma Stokhuyzen, the school 'confidant' as opposed to the class teacher. The class teacher would then become involved at a later stage in order to address the problem together with your child.

What are the specific signals of bullying that you should react to?

a. It is possible that your child is being bullied if:

- there are often minor health issues when they have to go to school: stomach ache, head aches, feeling sick etc.
- they say they are unhappy in the class or in the school
- they tell you stories about them being bullied and often name the same children as being involved

b. It is possible that your child has seen others being bullied if:

- they tell you about a child at school that is regularly being bullied by the same child or group of children. Your child does not like this but is unable to do anything about it.

c. It is possible that your child is bullying others if:

- they continually tell you stories about how everyone laughs about what they have been doing at school or how they have made fun of the teacher
- they are often stubborn and/or rebellious
- they always want to get their way
- they never or seldom tell you about who they play with at school or what they do together

With any of the above you would, of course, first talk with your child to find out exactly what is happening. Head aches do not always mean that bullying is happening. Stories about how popular they are does not mean that they are bullying others. Every child will try to get their own way. Only if a number of the above are present may you need to question your child more deeply.

If you then have the feeling or are certain that something is wrong at school you should contact us as soon as possible.

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. . . . Parents: What can you do?

When you make a teacher aware of bullying then there are a number of steps that can be taken:

- a. The teacher will contact your child and make an appointment to talk with them privately.
- b. You tell your child, if they did not already know, that you have told the teacher and ask them if they want to meet with the teacher either with or without you being there. You could then make the appointment on behalf of your child.
- c. The teacher contacts the child or children involved in the bullying and asks them the reasons for it and makes sure they are fully aware of the Golden Rules and the consequences of bullying.
- d. The teacher contacts the parents of a child that you think may be being bullied – if they were not already aware of this – and invites them for a meeting to determine if this is the case. If so, then the child in question would also be spoken to. It is important that a meeting takes place between the teacher and the child that is the victim of bullying, so that quick and appropriate action can be taken.

The action would usually take the form of:

- a. A meeting with the whole class wherein the children might be involved in determining subsequent sanctions if the bullying continues. The possible sanctions should be known to the class as these will have been discussed at the start of the school year. The class is then able to give its own vision of bullying and how it should be dealt with. This will depend upon the age and nature of the class.
- b. The children in the class will also be clearly reminded that they have a role to play regarding bullying in school. They are expected to stand up for victims of bullying and that bullying is always a very serious matter which should be made known to the teacher. This is not telling tales and can not be seen as being so.
- c. The teacher will ensure that children who help a victim of bullying do not become victims themselves.
- d. The teacher will arrange a meeting with the bully or bullies to find out what caused this behaviour to happen.
- e. If the bullying continues then sanctions will follow. The severity of any sanctions will depend upon the age of the class and the nature of the bullying. It could range from extra chores in the class to suspension or even removal from school.

Following an initial meeting you will be informed of what has happened at school. The teacher will keep you informed on how your child is at school. If you feel it necessary, a more formal meeting will be arranged.

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Parents: What can you do at home if your child is being bullied?

What can you do, if your child is being bullied, to support them at home?

- a. You can try and keep discussions ongoing. That means listening without making too many comments yourself on how they should handle the situation. Naturally, you should reassure your child that you support them completely no matter what happens.
- b. Try to build up your child's self-confidence as this is often very low in a victim of bullying.
- c. Avoid too many negative comments, even if your child approaches things in a completely different way than you would like to see.
- d. Give compliments every time he or she does something good. Every child is good at something and often we take this for granted without saying anything about it. Children grow in stature and confidence through receiving compliments.
- e. Give the child more responsibilities. This shows them that you believe them to be successful in these things.
- f. Give the child a say in a number of things at home. For example, choice of hairstyle, clothes or decorating their own room.
- g. Encourage your child, if possible, to read material that addresses the subject of bullying. The teacher can help you to find a suitable book. It can be a revelation for a child to read about someone else in a similar situation.
- h. Encourage your child to try out new experiences such as joining a club, but do not force them to do so, only encourage them.
 - Do more things together with your child.
 - Suggest that your child keeps a diary about the things that happen at school. This way they can express their feelings and experiences in their own words and might become more able to reflect upon them.
 - Never encourage your child to hit back, give as good as you get etc. this does not help. If your child was able to do this then they would not have become the victim of bullying. By encouraging such things you could well strengthen any feelings of inferiority.

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Parents: What can you do when your child belongs to the large group of children that are never involved in bullying or being bullied?

- a. Talk with them about this protocol.
- b. Encourage them not to be a follower. Explain how it must feel to be the victim of bullying and not to be part of the class. Tell them to look at things from every perspective. As a result, your child could understand why it is so important that everyone stands up against bullying.
- c. Teach your child to stand up for their own opinion and what they know to be right. In this way they can become confident enough to address bullies concerning their behaviour.
- d. Teach your child to give attention to a child who appears not to have a place within the class. And not blindly follow group behaviour.
- e. Encourage your child to ask the 'less popular' children home to play. In extreme cases this includes not excluding any one child from parties.

What can you do if your child is involved in the bullying of others?

- a. It is important to talk with the child and find out what exactly the problem is.
- b. It is a good idea to let the teacher have a meeting with him or her. Due to the child's behaviour, the relationship with the teacher may not be what it should be.
- c. Try and find out exactly why the child has become involved with bullying. Perhaps this is the only way they think they can survive in a group or they were the victims of bullying themselves in the past.
- d. Maybe the child is searching for extra attention and asking for it in a negative manner. Try to turn the negative attention into positive attention. Give compliments by positive behaviour and reward this in some way. Children involved in bullying can also be helped by strengthening their opinion of themselves through doing things together and reinforcing your appreciation of the positive things they do.
- e. Make your child aware of the negative effects of bullying on other children.
- f. Anyone concerned with bullying will be told at school that such behaviour will not be tolerated. Sanctions connected to continued bullying will be clearly explained. It is vital that you fully support the school in these sanctions. You can do this by making clear that, although you love and fully support your child, bullying is never acceptable and you will support the school with any necessary sanctions.

The school can not overstress the importance of the role of parents in helping the school to deal with bullying adequately. This applies to both the parents of the victim and the parents of the bully. It will only get better if all children involved keep, or get back, a sound feeling of self-respect. Parents of children who are not directly affected by bullying incidents can play a significant role in determining the atmosphere in school. Together, we can work on creating and maintaining a 'safe environment' for all children in our school.

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5. The teachers' role

At the Violenschool, International Primary School we attach great importance to the fact that all children have a basic right to feel respected and safe within the school environment. We are aware of the fact that studies have shown that, on average, one in four primary school children is the victim of bullying. That is the reason for the introduction of the Golden Rules in the school. These rules apply to and have to be adhered to by everyone within our school community. They provide clarity regarding what we consider to be most important i.e. everyone should be accepted for the way they are! Bullying is unacceptable!

In the following we will make clear how important we feel about this.

- a. The teachers will ensure that everyone is aware of the Golden Rules and follows them. The main issue is how we treat each other. Physical abuse, intimidation or bad language will not be tolerated. We trust that, in daily practice, we can achieve a well-mannered and respectful way of treating each other. This forms the basis of a 'safe environment' within our school. Only if children feel safe can they attain optimal achievements.
- b. At the start of the school year, teachers pay attention in the class to the Golden Rules. Together they discuss them, consider what is most important for the class and reach a consensus for sanctions that will be taken if the Golden Rules are not followed.
- c. The IB learner Profile acts as an important guideline for the characteristics we are looking for and endeavouring to reinforce in all our students. Students are required to reflect on this profile at regular intervals in the school year.
- d. The teachers are familiar with the 'school rules for staff' and use these in conjunction with the pupil statute for protocol for the suspension and removal of students ('leerlingstatuut bij Protocol schorsing en verwijdering van leerlingen').
- e. Wherever appropriate, the class teachers of the victim and the bully meet to discuss the situation and appropriate action.
- f. All teachers should keep a written record of any incidents of bullying. This can be in the school incident book or in a class book if the incident is a minor one that could be dealt with quickly and effectively within the class situation.