



**Visserschool**  
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# **(anti-) bullying protocol**

## **Visserschool**

## 1. Introduction

Unfortunately, bullying occurs in every school, including ours. It is a problem that we acknowledge and take seriously at our school as bullying is harmful to children, both for the victims and the bullies themselves. This serious issue needs to be addressed. How we address it at the Visserschool is outlined in this protocol.

*The goal of this protocol:*

- All children should feel safe during their primary school years so that they can develop to their fullest potential.
- By making rules and agreements visible, children and adults can hold each other accountable when unwanted situations arise (based on these rules and agreements).
- By supporting each other and showing mutual respect, we provide all children with the opportunity to enjoy going to school!

As a school, we implement several measures to prevent and combat bullying. The foundation of these measures is the establishment of the school's "Golden Rules." These Golden Rules apply to everyone, from kindergarteners to teachers, and are described in the School Guide.

Additionally, the school has an anti-bullying coordinator: Heleen van Heemskerck. Students, parents, and teachers can contact her if bullying occurs or if there is a suspicion of bullying. She can also provide guidance on preventing bullying.

## 2. The School's "Golden Rules"

### a) At our school, we respect everyone.

Not only do we avoid name-calling and making fun of each other, but we also adhere to the following rules:

- We do not touch anyone who doesn't want to be touched.  
*This, of course, means that we never trip, kick, hit, or fight with anyone.*
- We do not touch each other's belongings.  
*This, of course, means that we never damage or take someone else's things.*
- We welcome everyone into our group.  
*This, of course, means that we never stand up or walk away in a demonstrative manner when someone we don't like approaches.*
- We do not use offensive language.  
*This, of course, means that we don't give each other strange or derogatory nicknames, or use vulgar words to impress each other. You can hurt someone without realizing it.*

### b) At our school, we listen to each other.

When someone says they don't want to join in, or asks you to stop roughhousing/teasing, or requests you to return what you borrowed, you do so.

### c) At our school, if others don't follow these rules, you can always report to the teacher.

Don't solve problems with other children using offensive language, name-calling, hitting, or fighting. If necessary, go to a teacher. If you feel that you're really being bullied, go to your own teacher, and if you don't feel comfortable doing that, go to a teacher you can confide in, such as the designated contact persons. You can also do this discreetly by placing a note in the mailbox.

Teasing or being teased once in a while isn't so bad, but if you feel that you're truly being bullied, meaning that some children repeatedly disregard the rules mentioned above, you should report it. Measures can then be taken in consultation with you. This applies even if the bullying occurs outside of school hours as these rules apply in the classroom, on the schoolyard, both during and after school hours, as well as on the way home from school!

### 3. The Student

Unfortunately, bullying occurs in every school, including ours. But bullying is never okay! If you're being bullied, this can cause you to feel various negative emotions such as fear or rejection, sadness or insecurity etc.; perhaps even to the point that you don't want to go to school anymore. This should never happen or come this far and it is, therefore, crucial to report to someone that you're being bullied. This could be your parents, but it's also essential that your teacher knows about it as they can help stop the bullying.

Being bullied is undoubtedly very unpleasant and hurtful. But it can also be distressing when someone else in your environment or group is being bullied as bullying always ruins the atmosphere in the group. It's also very distressing to see your friends feeling upset especially when you feel like you can't help them. So, report this to your teacher and/or your parents as well!

#### What you can do yourself

##### Talk about it:

If you think your own teacher won't understand your problem well, then go to a teacher you feel comfortable talking to. You might be thinking, "How should I do that when there are always other kids around?"

*The answer is simple: Make an appointment in advance.*

This may sound complicated, but it's not. You just approach the teacher you want to talk to and say, "Can I talk to you sometime?" You don't have to say what you want to talk about yet. The teacher will find a suitable time to sit down with you, and you can discuss it together. This has several advantages:

- No one else will be listening.
- The teacher will have made time specifically set aside for you.
- You can think about what you want to say in advance.

If you find the idea of having such a conversation all by yourself intimidating, you're welcome to bring someone with you, like a friend or one of your parents.

If you decide to talk to a different teacher instead of your own, then later you'll discuss the issues with your own teacher, as your teacher needs to know about your problems in class to help you. After you've told everything, plans will be made together to stop the bullying. Also, if you haven't already done so, it might be important to talk to your parents. If you don't dare tell them yourself, your teacher can help you with that as well. In short, talking is the beginning of a solution.

##### Tell your parents

It's crucial that you also tell your parents that you're being bullied. They've probably noticed that you're feeling upset, and they will want to help you! It can also be helpful to talk to your parents if you don't feel comfortable going to your teacher (yet). Your parents can also talk to the teacher on your behalf without you, if you prefer. During that conversation, they can arrange for you to meet with the teacher. Your parents can also have a meeting at school together with you, where they assist you in talking to your teacher. You're the one who decides the way things go!

## Bullying Report Button

At the Visserschool, we aim to ensure 100% safety for all students. After all, we want every student to feel safe. How do we achieve this together? The AMOS student council came up with a "bullying report button": an easily accessible digital reporting point for students.

With the bullying report button, you can report bullying not only to your teacher, anti-bullying coordinator, or through the mailbox but also online. The "bullying report button" is placed in various locations within the school. It's a QR code that you can scan with your phone or a school tablet. This will direct you to a form with a few questions about the situation, whether you'd like to talk to someone about it and who that might be. You can also fill out this form if you see or know that someone else is being bullied.

The report is received by Ms. Heleen, the school's anti-bullying coordinator, and she takes action as soon as possible (within two working days at the latest). If the report is handled by the anti-bullying coordinator without involving the class teacher, the teacher will always be informed. Here too, you're the one who decides how it will go!

After these conversations, there may be various actions that need to be taken. Sometimes, there will be a discussion in class about what has happened. This might sound intimidating, but it's not as there can no longer be any secret bullying taking place since your teacher knows everything. Consequences will also be determined for the children who continue to bully.

There are many kids in your class who don't actually like bullying but are afraid to do anything about it themselves. With the teacher's encouragement, these kids can help by letting the teacher know when the bullies are at it again. This is not considered tattling!

Furthermore, the teacher will talk to the bully(ies) themselves. That might sound intimidating as well, but it is essential. It's good to understand why kids bully. Perhaps the bully is unhappy in class and demonstrates bullying behavior because of this, or they might have once been bullied themselves and think this is how to be the strongest. Or perhaps bullies are afraid they'll be bullied themselves and want to prevent it. If you can talk about the reasons for bullying, there's a good chance this behavior will naturally decrease.

### ***In summary***

*When everyone understands that bullying is completely unacceptable and is taken seriously; that bullies are held accountable for their behavior and has real consequences if you do it; when other children can also show that they don't actually like the bullies, there is a good chance it will eventually stop.*

*So, let's work together to ensure our school is 100% safe for everyone! We take you seriously, and we are here for you.*



#### 4. The Parents

When parents discover that their child is being bullied at school, they are usually very shocked. If this happens to you, don't be discouraged. It is of great importance that parents respond to signs of bullying as bullying is a serious problem that requires immediate action! Together, we can make the Visserschool 100% safe for everyone.

For this to happen, it is essential that we, as a school, are aware of the situation. Since bullying often does not occur openly, and bullied children often do not report it themselves, we may not always be aware of it. Consequently, we can only take action after the fact instead of addressing it beforehand to prevent it. We, therefore, strongly urge parents to discuss their concerns about this issue with us. Openness helps identify and address potential problems.

We understand that as a parent, you may feel vulnerable when you find out that your child is being bullied or, perhaps even worse, that your child is a bully. However, it is crucial that you contact us. You can contact your child's teacher, but if you have difficulty with this, you can also request an initial conversation with the internal contact person or another teacher (such as your child's previous year's teacher). Of course, contact will eventually be made with your child's present teacher, so they can work together with you and your child to address the problem.

What are the signs:

a) Your child may be being bullied if:

- they often have vague physical complaints when they have to go to school (such as stomachaches, headaches, nausea, etc.).
- they indicate feeling unhappy within the group or at school.
- they tell stories about being bullied, naming the same name(s) repeatedly.

b) Your child may witness bullying if:

- they mention that there is a child in the group who is regularly bullied by the same child(ren). Your child may feel sorry for them but might be too afraid to do anything.

c) Your child may be a bully if:

- they frequently come home with stories of how they gain popularity or trick the teacher.
- they are often contrary and rebellious.
- they always insist on getting their own way.
- they rarely or never talk about where they play or with whom they play or what they do outside.

Naturally, in such cases, you should first talk to your child and try to find out what is really going on as the above signs do not necessarily mean that your child is being bullied at school or that it is a bully.

*If, during the conversation with your child, you get the impression that targeted bullying is genuinely happening at school, please contact us as soon as possible.*

When the teacher of the bullied child is informed of the problem, various steps can be taken:

- The teacher contacts your child and invites them for a one-on-one conversation.
- You inform the child (if they are yet unaware) that you have talked to someone, and you ask whether they would like to have a conversation with you present or with the teacher alone. You can schedule an appointment for the child if needed.
- The teacher contacts the bully, asks them about the reasons behind their behavior, and reminds them of the school's rules and the consequences of continued bullying.
- The teacher may also contact the parents of the bullied child (if they were not the ones who reported the problem) and invites them for a conversation to find out if they also sense that something is wrong. If they do, a conversation with the bullied child is necessary.

It is essential to initiate a conversation between the teachers and (initially) the bullied child. Only when the teacher knows exactly what is happening can measures be taken, in consultation with the child.

These measures generally include:

- A discussion with the class in which bullying is made discussable, and children may be involved in the measures/punishments that will be taken if bullying continues. The potential consequences of bullying are generally known to the class because they were discussed/determined with the class at the beginning of the school year. Children can give their own views on bullying and the measures that should be taken against it, including creative solutions, depending on the atmosphere in the group. The severity of the punishment depends on the children's age and the nature of the bullying, ranging from, for example, chores to, in extreme cases, suspension or expulsion from school.
- The children who support the bullied child will be reminded once again that they also have a role to play in the group dynamics. They are expected to stand up for a weaker classmate, and they must report bullying to the teacher at all times, which is not considered tattling.
- The teacher will ensure that children who stand up for the bullied child do not become victims of the bully.
- The teacher will talk to the bully to find out what motivates their behavior.
- If a bully does not stop bullying, consequences will be imposed on their behavior.

After the first conversation, you will be kept informed about what is happening at school. The teacher will ask you to continue providing information about how your child is doing at home. If you feel the need, a more formal conversation can also take place.

### **Advice to the parents of our school**

*Parents of bullied children:*

- Keep the communication lines with your child open; continue talking to your child.
- If bullying occurs outside of school, try to contact the parents of the bully(ies) to discuss the problem. However, it is advisable to share this with the school because bullying outside school hours often carries over into school and the group.
- The best way to address bullying at school is to discuss it directly with the teacher.
- Self-esteem can be increased or restored through positive encouragement and praise.
- Encourage your child to engage in sports.
- Support your child's belief that bullying behavior will end.

*Parents of bullies:*

- Take your child's problem seriously.
- Don't panic; every child runs the risk of becoming a bully.
- Try to determine the possible cause.
- Make your child aware of the impact of their actions on others.
- Pay extra attention to your child.
- Encourage your child to engage in sports.
- Correct unwanted behavior and acknowledge your child's good behavior.
- Make it clear to your child that you support the school's decisions.

*All other parents:*

- Take the parents of the bullied child seriously.
- Encourage your child to interact with others in a positive way. Correct your child if they display undesirable behavior and acknowledge good behavior.
- Set a good example yourself.
- Teach your child to stand up for others.
- Teach your child to stand up for themselves.

*The school urgently needs the help of parents in cases of severe bullying. Both the parents of the bullied child as well as parents of the bully play a significant role in addressing this issue. Parents of children who belong to neither group may also have a substantial impact on the atmosphere at school. Together, we can work towards creating a safe school!*



## 5. The Teachers

At our school, we place great importance on ensuring that students feel respected and safe within the school and their peer groups. We are aware that research has shown that this is not the case for many elementary school children as, on average, one in four students is bullied. That's why we have developed the "Golden Rules" of the school. Everyone, from young to old, must adhere to these rules. These rules make it crystal clear what we consider most important: everyone at this school is accepted for who they are! Bullying will not be tolerated!

We will demonstrate the importance of these rules through the following measures:

*a) Teachers will ensure that everyone knows the content of the rules and adheres to them.*

The focus here is on how we treat each other at school. Physical aggression and coarse language will not be accepted. We aim to establish a well-mannered and respectful way of interacting with each other in daily practice. This is the foundation of a safe school environment. Only children who feel safe can perform to their full potential.

*b) At the beginning of each school year, teachers, together with their new class, discuss the "Golden Rules."*

They talk about what is important for their group that year and determine the measures that will be taken if these rules are violated.

*c) The school uses a method that ensures topics related to social behavior and social interactions are part of the curriculum in every class. This method provides various ways to address these topics within the school program.*

*d) Teachers will actively encourage the "average" students to stand up for the rights of the vulnerable.*

The "average" students in the class are those who neither bully nor are bullied and typically do not intervene when someone else is being bullied. We want to instill a sense of belonging among our students and create an atmosphere of unity in which bullying cannot thrive: "This is our class, we enjoy being together, and we don't tolerate bullying here." We want to teach children that a certain level of social control within the group is good and that if they notice problems, they should always come to us. This is not tattling; it's standing up for others.

*e) Despite regulations and good intentions, it may not be possible to completely eliminate bullying, especially since it often occurs in secret. If a teacher does notice a bullying problem, they will take action.*

The immediate response will depend on how the problem is discovered: by the teacher, a fellow student, the parents, or because the bullied child has come forward. However, it will always involve the teacher having a serious conversation with the bullied child. The subsequent steps will always be taken in consultation with the child.

*f) Steps that may be taken to help a bullied child:*

- The teacher has a conversation with the bullied child, assesses the problem, and works with the child to explore possible solutions.
- The teacher, after consulting with the bullied child, talks to the bully(ies). The bully(ies) are reminded of the school rules, and efforts are made to understand the root causes of their

bullying behavior. The consequences of bullying for others and for the bullies themselves (punishment and social isolation) are also explained. Additionally, the teacher tries to encourage the bully through rewards for good behavior and positive attention.

- The teacher, after consulting with the bullied child, addresses the class once again, emphasizing the "Golden Rules" of the school. The group is called upon to maintain a positive class atmosphere and stand up for children who are being bullied. Reporting problems to the teacher is encouraged.
- The teacher ensures that children who stand up for the bullied child are not themselves subjected to harassment.
- The teacher, if necessary and/or desired by the bullied child, contacts their parents and invites them for a discussion.
- The teacher, if necessary, contacts the parents of the bully(ies) and asks for their support in the anti-bullying policy (providing the opportunity for the child(ren) to stay behind after school or complete certain tasks at home or after school hours, discussing at home the reasons behind the bullying behavior, and making it clear to the child(ren) at home that bullying is unacceptable).
- The teacher monitors whether the initiated "action plan" continues to help. In other words, attention to the bully or the bullied child does not diminish.
- The teacher always has room for follow-up discussions with parents. They are regularly informed about their child's well-being. Moreover, parents are frequently asked how things are going at home.

*By addressing the problem of "bullying" in this way, we hope to eradicate it from our school so that the Visserschool is 100% safe!*

### **Support Within the Group**

#### *Support for the Bullied Student:*

- Show empathy, listen, and ask about who and how the bullying occurs.
- Investigate how the student reacts, what they do before, during, and after the bullying.
- Understand that crying or getting very angry is often the reaction that a bully wants to provoke.
- Help the student see that there are alternative ways to react.
- Look for and practice a different response, such as not isolating oneself.
- Make the bullied child aware of why a child bullies.
- Identify the solution the child wants.
- Emphasize the child's strengths.
- Reward (with praise or positive reinforcement) when the child behaves differently or better.
- Talk to the parents of the bullied student and the parents of the bully(ies).
- Do not overprotect the bullied child, for example, by bringing them to school or saying, "I'll go tell the bullies." This puts the bullied child in an exceptional position and can make the bullying worse.

#### *Support for the Bully:*

(Note: This is just as important as supporting the bullied student.)

- Talk; try to understand the reason for fighting or bullying (e.g., desire for dominance, jealousy, boredom).
- Make them aware of the impact of their behavior on the bullied student.

- Encourage them to apologize.
- Show them the positive (fun) aspects of the bullied student.
- Reinforce the rule that bullying is prohibited in and around the school: we adhere to this rule. Punish the child if they bully—reward (with praise or positive reinforcement) if the child follows the rules.
- Teach the child not to react in anger immediately, but to control themselves and adopt a "stop, think first" attitude or another way of behaving.
- Maintain contact between parents and the school, inform each other, and collaborate. Show empathy for the child; what is the cause of the bullying (e.g., problematic home situation, feeling excluded, jealousy, the desire for dominance, constantly competing, being pushed into an inappropriate role).
- Seek help from the Internal Supervisor if necessary; social skills training; Youth Healthcare; the family doctor; the Public Health Service (GGD).

*Support for Other Children in the Group:*

- Make children aware through conversations of the influence they (can) have on the continuation or cessation of bullying behavior.
- Encourage children to stand up for themselves.
- Encourage children to stand up for others.
- Highlight the strengths of the bullied student.
- Encourage playing and working together with the bullied student, for example, by creating an outdoor play plan before breaktime (who plays with whom, what, and where).
- Hold children responsible for maintaining a positive atmosphere in the group.
- Reiterate the school and group rules.
- Emphasize that children can be different.