

Anti bullying protocol

A personal touch in a sustainable environment

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL ALMERE
THE NETHERLANDS

Almere 2016

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Preface

One of the premises of the International School Almere is that students can 'learn and feel comfortable and safe at school'. IS Almere has a zero-tolerance attitude to bullying and clearly states that the school is a place where the students are seen, challenged and heard; where students can discover and develop their passion and talent; where there is room to deal with differences between people and their cultures and where difficult questions are not avoided.

Teachers, support staff, school mentors and the school board foster this development by creating an open and pleasant working atmosphere in the classroom and beyond. By creating an overview and making this visible, the organization of the school contributes to the feeling of safety and security. There is room for everyone to be true to themselves as long as it does not conflict with the expectations of the school or exceeds personal boundaries. Thus, it should be possible for every student to feel appreciated.

This anti-bullying protocol is written for students, parents and school staff and represents the school's policy with regard to bullying. It is part of the School Security Policy and as such is connected with other policies, such as policies on suspension and expulsion of students and the policy on unacceptable behaviour (aggression, sexual harassment and violence). The protocol describes bullying, how bullying can be prevented and how to approach the situation when bullying occurs. The main purpose of the protocol is to prevent and confront bullying, by giving all stakeholders clarity on their role. It also has a purpose of providing information and has a referral function.

1. Definitions

Teasing

We talk about teasing when the effects of one's behavior are not pleasant for others, but can still be seen as a game that is not experienced as threatening by any of the parties involved. Teasing is a playful way of dealing with a "conflict" and has no adverse consequences for the person undergoing it. As a result, pupils develop a skill that could be useful in life when it comes to conflict management.

Bullying

Bullying is defined as the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of the school staff of a written, verbal or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at a target that does one or more of the following:

- Causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property
- Places the target in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself or of damage to his/her property
- Creates a hostile environment at school for the target
- Infringes on the rights of the target at school
- Substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of school

At IS Almere, we apply the rule that you can act at your own will, unless that behaviour affects anyone negatively. When that happens, the students (and possible third parties involved) are obligated to find a solution to deal with that negative impact. The person who is targeted determines whether the action is seen as bullying or teasing.

What one person regards as a form of harassment, others can interpret as harmless actions. What is a joke or teasing for one person, can be experienced by others as annoying or hurtful. Actions that may not be meant personally against one person, can actually hurt someone. When this occurs, it is necessary to sit down with each other, possibly with a third person, to work on a solution.

2. Forms of bullying

Bullying can take the same forms as teasing. The following five categories are examples of bullying. IS Almere takes measures against all forms of bullying.

Verbal bullying

This includes: verbal abuse, threatening, ridiculing, sending unsolicited messages via email or chat, using an app or website with the intention of making someone look bad by sending comments, photos and/or videos, deriding or giving nicknames based on physical characteristics, (ethnic) origin, religion, sexual preference or giving a wrong answer in class.

Physical bullying

This includes: pulling, pushing, spitting, kicking, hitting, tripping, scratching, biting, or pulling one's hair.

Intimidation

Examples: following/stalking a student or awaiting someone, setting up a trap, sexual harassment, obstructing passage or forcing someone to give them money or other properties.

Isolation

For example: excluding a classmate constantly by making it clear that he or she is not wanted, or silencing that student.

Stealing or destruction of property

For example: stealing, damaging and destroying property.

Cyber bullying

For example: targeting students online via social media or otherwise.

3. Parties involved in bullying

When bullying occurs, different parties are involved: the bullied student(s), the bullying student(s), the silent middle class, the staff and the parents.

To tackle bullying, both in terms of prevention and in curative form, it is necessary that all parties are involved in the implementation of the policy. We employ a five-pronged approach.

The bullied pupil

Students who are bullied tend to have different interests than most of their peers, or they do things differently. Many students who are bullied have a limited resilience. They are unable to actually take action against bullying and emit this. They are often anxious and insecure in a group and are afraid to say anything because they are afraid of being rejected. This fear and uncertainty are further enhanced by the experienced bullying, causing the student to enter a vicious circle, which can only be broken with external help. Bullied students often feel lonely, don't have many friends to fall back on in the environment in which they are being bullied and may sometimes get along better with adults than with their peers.`

The bullying pupil

Students that bully are often physically and/or verbally stronger than the bullied student. Girls mostly (75%) bully through psychological violence (exclusion, gossip) and by means of physical violence (25%). For boys it's the opposite: 75% uses physical violence, while the remainder is being done through psychological violence.

Bullying students position themselves in an aggressive manner and react with threats of violence or indirect use of force. They often seem to be popular in a classroom, but force their popularity on the group by showing how strong and daring they are. Aggressive bullying pupils are not only physically stronger than their peers, they also often have a poorly developed sense of empathy, are impulsive and prefer to dominate other children.

A bullying student has not learned how to express his or her aggression/anger in any other way than by bullying. They sometimes have been bullied themselves in the past. Bullying students often experience a sense of guilt in the long term, which can burden them. Because of their limited social skills they often struggle to build and maintain friendships based on other grounds than those of power and sharing that power. Bullying students often lack social development, which has consequences for themselves and others.

The middle group

The so-called 'silent middle' involves the students that do not actively participate in or resist bullying. They keep some distance. The 'followers' do participate in bullying, either out of fear or out of fear of reckoning at a later stage. A follower's greatest fear is to become a victim him/herself. Sometimes the followers think that bullying can make them look tough and could possibly contribute to his or her popularity. Bullying is often supported by the followers, because this behaviour increases the attention they are getting. Without followers, bullying would probably quickly diminish or stop altogether.

Very occasionally, a student or a small group of students might dare to stand up against the bully(s). The middle group plays an important role in solving bullying problems.

The employees

Bullying often happens in a closely-guarded secret group: students know that others are being bullied; yet nobody dares to tell a teacher or parent. The employees therefore are often unaware that students are being bullied. When seeing inappropriate behaviour, they do not always interpret it as bullying. Employees should (in doubt) always address students' behaviour.

The parents

When students are bullied, they tend not to tell their parents. They fear involving parents and mentors will lead to the problem being addressed in the wrong way, making things worse. They often feel ashamed or believe that they have provoked the bullying somehow and deserve it.

4. Preventive Approach

The mentor

From the beginning of the school year, the mentor has a big responsibility in creating a safe class environment, starting from the introduction day in early September. There is an extensive program with a strong emphasis on learning how to properly interact, with the introductory camp in which the students get to know each other as a pivotal activity.

By formulating questions about awareness, classes will get clarity on how to interact with each other. Questions like "What are the rules of engagement that we all agree to?" These rules will be written down, signed by all the students and made visible in the classroom. In addition, the rules for interaction, as described in the school guide, will be discussed again, so these are clear for everyone.

Examples of rules on interaction:

- We listen to each other.
- We let each other speak.
- We respect each other's personal boundaries.
- We do not touch each other's stuff.
- We exclude no one.
- We solve disputes by talking to each other about what is important to us.
- We notify the teacher or mentor when someone is being bullied.
- Be yourself and give others the room to stay true to themselves.
- When something is unpleasant we will tell someone in a correct, constructive way.

The class brainstorm is also about the difference between teasing and bullying. This can be clarified by the paragraphs "Teasing" and "Bullying" (p. 4).

After the introduction to bullying, more time will be devoted to the social climate during the weekly mentor lessons, by including class discussions and joint assignments. During the mentor classes, there is also room for individual conversations with the mentor, for example, if a student wants to talk about bullying or wants to express his concerns about a classmate.

Apart from the introduction day and the mentor lessons, the school provides support for confidence-building and team-building skills through external organisations.

Teachers and support staff

The exemplary behaviour of teachers and staff is very important. Bullying is less likely to occur in a climate with clear rules about communication and interaction, where acceptance of differences is encouraged and where arguments can be settled. This exemplary behaviour is founded in upholding the rules of conduct and school policies. Staff and teachers should have a joint approach regarding the code of conduct. All employees are expected to intervene if they notice any untoward behaviour in and around the school premises.

Policy published

The anti-bullying policy should be available to pupils, parents and staff, by referring to it in the school and publishing it on the school website. It should be regularly evaluated and adjusted, when necessary. Staff will get training opportunities regarding bullying and the anti-bullying school policy, as part of their professional development

5. Curative approach

It is important to take the student who is being bullied seriously and to provide a listening ear. The mentor is always the first point of contact for students and parents.

The mentor

The mentor takes a clear stand against bullying and advises on how to respond. The mentor gives the student who is bullied a clear indication, making sure the student knows that the problem is taken seriously and will involve people from inside (and outside) the school if necessary (mentors, teachers, the caretaker and the anti-bullying coordinator). The mentor engages the student who is being bullied in the process to the extent that the bullied student actively gets involved in solving the issue with the help of the mentor.

The following steps can be followed here:

1. Inventory of the problem with colleagues (OP and OOP) and anti-bullying coordinator by the mentor
2. Talking to bullied student
3. Talking to bullying pupil
4. If necessary, start conversation with classmates
5. Mentor informs parents involved about the situation
6. Draw up a plan (see possible steps below), if necessary with anti-bullying coordinator
7. Mentor informs parents involved about teachers and teaching plan
8. Plan implementation and evaluation moments
9. Evaluate the plan with all the stakeholders
10. Sanctions by programme coordinator, should the bullying persist.
11. Aftercare, close monitoring and registration of the situation

Possible steps in preparing a plan:

- Organise a conversation between the bully and the target.
- Organise a class discussion and other activities with the aim of restoring safety in the classroom and mobilising the silent majority. This should be a general discussion, so that the bullied student won't get the blame. The subject of safety in the school can be discussed as a social item.
- An interview with the bullied student and his or her parents.
- A conversation between the parents of the student who is bullied and those who engage in bullying.
- Mentors and/or psychologists can refer bullied students to a social-skills training (Oke-op-school provides these trainings for free, also to international students, e.g. rots- en watertraining).
- The student who bullies should be provided with the opportunity to atone and the right to learn and make amends for his/her behaviour.
- **No-Blame Approach.** The No-Blame approach is a method where no one gets punished, but an appeal is made to the positive power of a group to solve the situation, making the approach to the problem a shared responsibility of the group. The group consists of a friend of the target, the bully, a follower and two or three people in the middle group.

Addressing the students that bully

The first conversation will be between the mentor and the student who bullies. Depending on the severity of the behaviour and the outcome of the conversation, the bully agrees to apologize to the target. Should the behaviour be repeated, alternative penalties will be applied. The situation is recorded in the student's file and communicated to the parents either in a conversation or in writing. A follow-up conversation should provide information whether behaviour has improved.

There can be a few extra conversations with the mentor and the bully, in order to:

- Find out what the possible cause of the bullying behaviour is.

- To further develop the sense of empathy of the bully.

The bully can get outside expertise, to further assist his or her behavioural change. The school can also set a social-skills training as a condition.

Teachers and support staff

All employees of the school have to act as an example for the students. They must intervene when they receive signals that seem to point in the direction of bullying and inform the mentor, who subsequently goes through the described steps. Employees may be asked to pay extra attention in order to find out which students are targets of bullying.

The anti-bullying coordinator(s)

At IS Almere, Milou van Etten has been appointed Anti-bullying Coordinator, who can be addressed if the mentor is absent. The Anti-bullying Coordinator can also support the mentor and provide additional help where needed.

The parents

The parents of both the bullied student and the student who is bullying should be supportive. It is important that the parents of the students that are involved are aware of their child's behavior and take it seriously. They should be involved addressing bullying as described above. Parents should be informed about the anti-bullying policy. This can be done through the school prospectus and the website of the school. The mentor can refer to the protocol. Parents should be given information and advice about bullying and ways to tackle bullying.

See Appendix 1 for a detailed description of signals and advice.

6. Sanctions & consequences

Depending on the severity of the behaviour and outcomes of this behaviour, measures will be taken towards the bullying students. These range from warnings to suspension and expulsion from school. Each situation will be individually assessed. Criminal offenses will be reported to the police.

7. Organizations

The school can call upon agencies that deal with bullying/inappropriate behaviour, for assistance or educational and prevention schemes.

Within our school:

IS Almere's has a network, which can be called upon in case of undesirable behaviour (such as bullying, discrimination, aggression, sexual harassment and violence), if the mentor, teachers or the school leadership team are not able to handle the situation, or if the students involved do not trust any of the aforementioned

Anti-bullying coordinator: Milou van Etten (m.vanetten@edu.isalmere.nl).

Trust/Contact person: Chris Champion (c.champion@edu.isalmere.nl)

External organization:

- Maatschappelijk Werk/ Social Work
http://www.zorggroep-almere.nl/maatschappelijk_werk.php
(works in neighborhood teams, so the address is dependent on where the student lives)
- Samen Veilig Almere/ previously Bureau Jeugdzorg
<http://www.samen-veilig-flevoland.nl/>
(works in neighborhood teams, so the address is dependent on where the student lives)
- **Oke-op-school**
<http://www.oke-op-school.nl/home/vo/>
Telefoon: 036-5296032

Appendix 1: Information for parents of bullied students.

Possible of bullying:

- Does not want to go to school.
- Does not want to talk about school.
- Does not bring other children home or is invited by others.
- Poorer results in school than before.
- Materials are lost or broken.
- Headaches or stomach aches are common.
- Has bruising in unusual places.
- Not wanting to go to sleep; frequent waking up or having nightmares; bedwetting.
- Does not want to celebrate birthday.
- Does not want to play outside.
- Does not dare to get something from the store.
- Does not want / dare to go to a club.
- Does not want to wear certain clothes.
- Is irritable, angry or sad at home.
- Self-created injuries to avoid having to go to school.

What parents / caretakers can do themselves:

- Take your child seriously and tell them that you are going to talk to others to stop the bullying.
- Bullying at school can best be discussed directly with the mentor.
- Talk to your child or ask your child to write down what happened.
- Guarantee your child that you will handle this carefully and sensitively.
- Explain to your child why children bully.
- Talking together about bullying, possibly with the help from a book/film on the subject.
- Explain that adults don't interfere, because they do not notice that bullying is taking place.
- Tell your child that there is a possibility that the bullying will not stop immediately when the situation has been addressed. The problems of a bullied student can be difficult to resolve in the short term.
- Make sure the topic is being discussed.
- If you are not allowed to speak to anyone else about the bullying, support your child, give background information and make it clear that the school will deal with it carefully. Before you promise anything, ask what the school can do.
- Reward your child and help it restore self-respect.
- Encourage your child to practice a (team) sports.
- Keep the communication open; keep talking to your child. Do this in a positive way; give suggestions to end the bullying. A negative way of asking questions might be: "What bad things happened today?"
- Keep regular and intensive contact with the mentor of your child.
- If your child really suffers from bullying, at the expense of self-confidence, help from an expert may be required. This may be individually or in a social-skills training.
- Do not keep quiet about the bullying, but take action by sharing it with someone.

Appendix 2: Information for parents of bullying students

- Take the problem seriously.
- Do not panic: every child can be tempted to start bullying.
- Try to find out the possible cause of the bullying.
- Make your child sensitive to what the behaviour does to others.
- Pay attention to your child by letting her or him see that you value him/her.

- Encourage your child to practice a sport.
- Watch a film about bullying together.
- Keep the communication open; keep talking to your child. Give advice on other ways to deal with each other.
- Keep regular and intensive contact with the mentor of your child and the anti-bullying coordinator.
- There are ways to get your child to participate in a social skills training. Information can be obtained from the mentor or Care Team Coordinator.

Appendix 3: Cyber bullying.

What can students do to prevent cyber bullying?

- Remember that not everything is true that you encounter on the internet.
- Use a separate email addresses to register yourself on websites. Choose an email address that does not contain your own first and last name.
- If you feel embarrassed by something you've seen, tell someone you trust.
- Always be friendly and honest and not abusive.
- Remove unknown people from your contact list.
- Leave a chat when something bad happens.
- Do not call or email with others you know from the Internet, and do not speak to them without your parents knowing.
- Do not send jokes, threatening mail, or hate mail.
- Do not give personal information to people you only know from chatting.

Conclusion:

- Do not give email addresses, common addresses, names (nor from school), phone numbers, passwords, etc. especially to people you do not know. Pay particular attention to photos of yourself: if you put a picture on the Internet, it can be easily copied and posted on another website. The picture can be on the internet for years, even if you have removed it. Photos can be edited without your knowledge or permission. Keep that in mind.
- Be careful when using your webcam. Do not use a webcam with people you do not know or trust. Your images can be stored and used to show them to other people. They can also be used for purposes other than those for which you made them.

What can you do against cyber bullying?

- Realize that this is done by someone who has personal difficulties and no one to help him/her.
- Do not ever take it personally.
- If the bullying is being done by people you do not know, do not take name-calling or insults personally. Often people make negative comments out of boredom. The anonymity of the Internet makes people curse easily.
- Ignore hate mails - messages.
- It's best not to respond to hate mails or other digital harassment. Ignoring is effective in the early stages of bullying, as long as the bully has not been bullying for a long time. Bullies often want attention. If you do not respond, bullies will look for someone else to annoy.
- If you get hate emails or messages, block the sender.
- Talk about it.

Talking about it with your friends, your parents or a teacher you trust is important, especially when the bullying has been taking place for a while and you feel threatened by it. Preferably talk with someone who knows a lot about computers and the Internet.

- Keep the evidence.
- If the bullying is already in an advanced stage and the threats are expressed via the mail or posts on social media, keep it. No matter how annoying the mails can be, do not throw them away, but print out the hate mail or save the messages. It is evidence that can be used against the bully. The IP address of the e-mail can sometimes be used to find out from which computer the email was sent. A provider often has a helpdesk that handles complaints about nasty mail, messages, etc. They often have the technical ability to check who sent it, so make sure you contact the help desk.

- You can go to one of the contacts at school that are specially appointed to assist you with forms of undesirable behaviour. They can tell you what you can do to stop the disturbing behaviour or help you if the annoying behaviour has already stopped, but you still suffer from it.
- Bullying can be so persistent that the bullying will be referred to as "stalking". This is an offense. Sometimes it might be necessary or advisable to file a police report.
- Do not feel guilty when something terrible happens. It is not your fault.

Appendix 4: Suggested Reading and Viewing

Dutch books

Mieke van Stigt, *Alles over Pesten*. (2014)
Marjolijn Vermande, *Pesten op School*. (2015)
Sue Young, *Van pesten naar Samenwerken*. (2012)
Fina van de Pol-Drent, *Met buikpijn naar School*. (2013)
Patrick van Veen & Sarah Mutsaers, *Pestkop Apenkop*. (2012)

English books

Michelle Anthony, *Little girls can be mean* (2010).
Beth Goobie, *Stick and Stones* (2002).
Gershen Kaufman, Lev Raphael, Pamela Espeland, *Stick up for yourself* (1990).
New Moon Books Girls Editorial Board. *Friendship: How to Make, Keep, and Grow Your Friendships* (1999).
Trevor Romain, *Bullies are a pain in the brain* (1997).
Jerry Spinelli, *Crash* (1996).
Jerry Spinelli, *Loser* (2002).

Dutch websites

www.pestenislaf.nl
<http://www.pestweb.nl/middelbare-school.html>
<http://www.pesttenet>
<http://www.stoppestennu.nl/digitaal-pestten>
<http://www.schoolenveiligheid.nl/thema/pesten/>
<http://www.pestkopapenkop.nl/>

English websites

www.bullying.org
www.eyesonbullying.org
www.safeyouth.org/scripts/topics/bullying.asp

Dutch films

Spijt! (2013)
Stuk! (2014)
Ben X (2007)
Sophie & Arthur (2004)
Cyberbully (2011)

English films

Cyberbully (2011)
Odd girl out (2005)

Documentaries/short films

Bully (2011)
Cyberbully (2015)
Bluebird (2004)