

October 2023 (adapted version following kick-off meeting with schools and schools boards)

Concerning: Starting classes for preschoolers/Early Years students

In school year 2022-2023, we observed an increase within SPPOH of young children (4 or 5 years old) being reported to regular education where the regular primary school cannot meet the support needs. This concerns both children in which the regular school, upon registration, has strong doubts about whether they can offer the pupil appropriate education and children in which the teacher, shortly after the start, indicates to be unable to meet their needs.

The support needs of these children are particularly related to being able to function in a group. More proximity to an adult is required and specific attention is needed to teach the necessary skills. The causes vary, from not being used to functioning in a group with other children to developmental delays in one of the domains. At registration, the cause is often not clear and no research has yet been carried out or youth aid deployed. However, immediately upon registration or during the settling-in period, support needs are observed that cannot be met within a group of more than 20 children and one teacher. At this point, a search for a suitable place then starts for these children where waiting lists slow things down but it is also questionable whether the extra support is needed for a long time. During this process, the children often receive no or limited education. With the starter classes, we want to offer these children a promising start in regular education by giving them time, attention and space to develop and gain insight into the long-term support needs within education.

Principles:

- The class provides education close their home and is for children from the same catchment area (no transport arrangements apply);
- There is room for 12 to 15 children. These are additional places. They are therefore not pupils who are already at the school;
- The organisational form is free: a separate class in its own classroom or another form;
- There is a full-time teacher in the classroom who will provide teaching;
- Pre-school-Early years education is provided in the classroom;
- There is a partner from youth health care services attached to the group who will bring in expertise and provide youth health care within the group;
- The children enter at 4 or 5 years of age and are enrolled in the school;
- As far as possible, the children move on to regular classes at the first school of application/enrolment;
- Application takes place via the MDO (in the presence of the SPPOH advisor) on initiative of first school of registration to the school with the starter class;
- Children attend the startclass for one year, which can be extended once by a maximum of one year on substantive grounds.

Target group criteria:

- The pupil is 4 or 5 years old;
- Educational and support needs are not (yet) admissible to S(B)O. There is no insight yet to be able to determine views;
- The hypothesis is that the child cannot yet join a mainstream group, because the needs are not yet clear and there has not been enough appropriate provision. Expectation is outflow to a regular primary school;
- Further coordination with youth welfare partner.

Funding:

- Basic pupil funding through school enrolment;
- €60,000 budget for more inclusive education from SPPOH;
- Funding youth aid 2023-2024 from the three municipalities in the form of a budget or care in kind.