



## Providing a safe educational environment, protected by the law; experiences from The Netherlands

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Every child has a right, safeguarded by international treaties, to be protected from violence and to develop and realize his/her full potential in a safe, healthy, inclusive and non-discriminating learning environment. After a couple of horrible cases in which pupils committed suicide, allegedly because they were bullied at school, the Dutch government decided to create new legislation to address safety in schools. The Education Law Acts were amended and introduced a duty of care for the school board for the social, psychological and physical safety of pupils in primary and secondary education.

This paper describes the legislative measures against bullying in the Netherlands and examines the way the Inspectorate of Schools, Dutch courts, and mediating organizations in education, have interpreted the duty of care for school boards. In what way has the law provided for a safer environment for pupils? What evidence do we have at present, two years since the law was introduced? We will also discuss the complexity of multiple duties for school boards which have occurred, such as providing ample care for pupils with disabilities or special needs, and providing a safe and orderly environment for every child in school. We conclude with some further steps which could be taken to enhance education laws, aiming at safeguarding pupils.