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ombudsman**

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geef kinderen invloed

Return address: PO Box 93122, 2509 AC The Hague, The Netherlands

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
Minister for Primary and Secondary Education and Equality
PO Box 16375
2500 EH THE HAGUE
THE NETHERLANDS

Re: Shortage of primary school places on Bonaire

Dear Ms Tielen,

As Ombudswoman for Children, I ensure that children's rights are upheld. This equally applies to children who live on Bonaire. Recently, I have received many complaints from parents who say that their child is unable to attend school because the primary schools on Bonaire are full. I am extremely concerned about how this affects these children's right to education and their development. I therefore call on you to remedy this problem before the start of the new school year in August.

What is the problem?

A sizeable group of children on Bonaire are unable to attend school because all the primary schools have been full for quite some time. This particularly affects children aged four, five and six. The situation is likely to worsen further at the start of the new school year in August because there are also an insufficient number of places for children who just turned four.

The children who have been unable to attend school for an extended period have not received any form of education at all. This will have an undeniable effect on their future education and development.

The current situation also puts a lot of pressure on these children's families. Parents, for example, have to miss work in order to stay at home and care for their child. By doing so, they run the risk of losing their jobs, with all the consequences this entails. I have also received indications that some parents have been forced to keep an older child home from school to look after a younger brother or sister.

What are my concerns?

I have discussed this not only with parents and children, but also with the Public Entity of Bonaire (OLB), the compulsory education officer, the National Office for the Caribbean Netherlands (part of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science) and two of the four school boards. All the parties agree on the urgency of the problem. Based on my discussions, I have identified obstacles that are not contributing to a timely and long-term solution:

1. there are difficult working relations between several of the parties involved. A joint and constructive approach that would remedy the situation across the board is lacking, one where all the parties possess the same information and the children's interests are put first. According to some parties, actions and ideas that could solve the problem have been insufficiently investigated and/or have not been utilised.

Page 1/2

Date:

11 June 2026

Re:

Shortage of primary school places on Bonaire

Our reference

KOM013/2026

Ombudswoman for Children

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*The Ombudswoman for Children,
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2. there is a lack of clarity about the actual number of children who currently lack places at a primary school, along with those who will start in the new school year. The numbers mentioned diverge considerably: from 20 to as many as 96 children. All the parties agree that a group of mostly Spanish-speaking children have remained under the radar because their parents have not registered them at a primary school or the compulsory education body.
3. there are concerns about the suitability of the premises that the OLB rented in March 2026 for the purpose of turning them into a school building that would be appropriate for young children. The problems here centre on the lack of a play area and toilets that are too high for children aged four, five and six.
4. no decision has yet been taken regarding which school board will be formally responsible for the education that will be provided in the premises rented by the OLB. As long as this situation persists, no furniture can be ordered or job vacancies placed for new teachers. Partly on account of the (long) lead times and the approaching summer period, time is running out.
5. parents are not being actively informed about when their child will potentially be able to attend school. This is causing a great deal of stress.

Page 2/2

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KOM013/2026

Parliamentary questions

In March, you were sent parliamentary questions regarding the shortage of school places on Bonaire. Your answers were received on 11 May. When I compare these answers to the information I obtained from my discussions with the parties, I notice areas where the information conflicts. This makes me very concerned.

Call to action

The shortage of places in primary schools on Bonaire is an urgent problem that threatens to increase even more by the start of the new school year. I find it unacceptable that children are sitting at home for long periods without receiving education. I call on you and the responsible parties on Bonaire to make every effort to ensure that all children are identified, that they will be able to go to school at the start of the new school year and that parents and children will be properly informed about the steps of this process. I also ask you to help strengthen the working relations between the parties responsible, to keep track of the situation and ensure that agreements are followed up.

Due to the urgency of this situation for the children of Bonaire, I would appreciate receiving your reply to my letter by 15 June.

Yours sincerely,

Margrite Kalverboer
Ombudswoman for Children