



Everyone's a VIP@GO!



Go! onderwijs van de
Vlaamse Gemeenschap

Colophon

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Foreword

Everyone's a VIP@GO!. Indeed, anyone can enrol as a pupil or a student in one of GO!'s educational institutions, whatever their age, origins, philosophical, ideological or religious convictions. The Flemish Community Education (in short: GO!), is an open house for education that welcomes anyone with an eager mind to learn.

This booklet is meant to help our foreign friends and colleagues in education to understand how the GO! educational system works in Flanders and the Brussels-Capital Region. We explain our mission, vision and values, our educational project, our main-springs and motivations. We also cast a glance on how teachers and other personnel put all our theories into practice in the different schools and centres for education.

We hope that leafing through this booklet will give you a clear view of what GO! has to offer to babies, toddlers, children, youngsters, adults and society as a whole. It should also become clear that our aim is first and foremost to offer the best possible education to everyone and that we want to enable all our pupils to develop their talents and skills to the fullest extent, without any distinction or discrimination. Learning together how to live together is our baseline in doing so.

Raymonda Verdyck
Managing Director

Education in Flanders

GO! is organised by the public body called 'GO! onderwijs van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap', and represents the public education in Flanders organised by the Flemish Community. Despite being financed by the Flemish Government, it functions independently of the Flemish Ministry of Education. Apart from GO! there is also the subsidised public network, run by our provinces and municipalities, and the subsidised free network, mainly organised by groups affiliated to the Catholic church.

GO! embodies the practical outcome of every parent's constitutional right to choose a school within reasonable proximity to his or her home. The Belgian constitution also guarantees free access to compulsory education. Consequently, primary and secondary schools are not allowed to charge an enrolment fee.



Responsibility at three levels

GO! offers education at all levels, with the exception of higher education. GO! schools are spread all over Flanders and the Brussels-Capital Region. Many GO! schools have several locations, in different areas of a town or city.

By special decree in 1989, State Education became Flemish Community Education for the Dutch speaking part of Belgium and French Community Education for the French speaking part of the country. From then on, Flemish Community Education was run by an independent council on behalf of the Flemish Government. Management was gradually decentralised, and in 2000 responsibilities were finally established at three levels: the local (the school), the regional (the 'school group'), and the central level (GO! Council).

At the local level, the school and its different locations are managed by one director, a school council, a parents' council and an educational council. At the regional level, the 'school group' is managed by a general director, a board of governors and a board of principals. The group manages all GO!'s educational institutions in a well-defined region. The GO! Council's main mission is to guarantee freedom to choose a school of one's own preference in Flanders and the Brussels-Capital Region. The Council also decides on the major strategies for GO!'s future. It is supported by administrative and educational services, under the supervision of a managing director, located in the House of GO! (in Dutch: Huis van het GO!) in Brussels.

Our educational services act as critical partners and offer support-on-the-job for teachers as well as guidance on a management level. They are also responsible for the development of curricula. In addition they try and stimulate all kinds of innovational projects in education. The in-service training department offers all kinds of training and courses to teachers, principals and other members of staff.

GO! in figures

Our organisation represents:

- approximately 1000 schools and facilities
- more than 320,000 pupils and trainees
- 15% to 20% of the total amount of pupils in Flanders and Brussels
- 36,000 staff members

GO!'s Mission, Vision and Values

Mission


GO! aims at reaching maximum learning benefit, entire personality development, active citizenship and individual well-being of every individual. We focus on what unites people. Children, youngsters and adults learn how to live together, beyond their differences. The school is turned into a significant learning and living environment for the creation of a more equitable society: a free democracy of active citizens in which all are given equal chances to develop themselves as much as possible.

We intend to do this by:

- organising and offering diversified, high-quality education that is well-spread geographically and accessible to all;
- actively striving towards the ideal of the Extended School, in close cooperation with all our stakeholders;
- the democratic build-up and continuous development and optimisation of our education;
- stimulating innovative views on education, if they are justified and realistic, and beneficial to our basic mission.

Vision

GO! has a clear vision of what the school of the future implies:

- The school of the future offers high-quality education to a cultural mix of pupils and adult learners.
 - The school is a pleasant learning and living environment where children, youngsters and adults learn how to live together on the basis of mutual respect and equivalence.
 - Being a pluralist entity, the school reflects the entire society and strives towards equal education opportunities. It focuses on citizenship and puts everyone's well-being at the centre.
 - The school is open to the outside world, providing opportunities for lifelong learning.
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- In this modern learning environment, set within a fully accessible, multi-functional and sustainable building, the newest IT-applications are constantly being put at everyone's disposal.
- The school of the future is fully integrated into society, maintaining close ties with the business world and the various cultural, social and economic actors.
- The teacher's goal is to inspire, guiding the pupils through an ambitious learning process so that they can acquire as much benefit from learning as possible, thereby taking into account the skills, fields of interest and individual learning capacities of every individual.

Values

Go!s goal is learning together how to live together based on respect, openness, equivalence, sincerity, involvement and commitment, values that form the essence of active citizenship.



Anyone can learn@GO!

According to the Belgian Constitution, every child has a right to education. In order to guarantee this, education is compulsory for a period of 12 years, starting on 1st September of the year in which a child reaches the age of 6 and ending in the year of his or her 18th birthday.

Our non-compulsory education includes nursery care for children from three months to two and a half years, kindergarten for children from two and a half years up to six, part-time art education starting at the age of six and finally education for adults from the ages of 16 to 99. Lifelong learning is one of our most important assets.

So anyone can join GO!, from three months up to 99 years of age.

Nursery: 3 months to 2,5 years

It all starts in the nursery. High-quality education should start at a very young age. Attending pre-school kindergarten is a crucial condition for equal education opportunities and a successful school career. Nurseries are stimulated to collaborate with one of our kindergartens; that way every child gets the opportunity to become acquainted with real school life. Early language training - Dutch in the first place - is one of our main assets as an increasing number of children come from non-Dutch speaking families.

Kindergarten: 2,5 to 6 years

Once a child has reached the age of two and a half years, it can go to kindergarten. The earlier a child can start, the better his or her chances are to be successful. Our members of staff make it possible for all children to explore their new world in a playful, creative and active way.



Primary education: 6 to 12 years

Throughout kindergarten and further on in primary school the entire personality of every child is given all the attention it needs. In doing so, we pay attention to the number of pupils, their development level, their own rhythm, their fields of interest, their needs and singularities.

Pupils acquire the knowledge, the competences and the attitudes they need to grow into independent citizens. We keep them constantly involved in the learning process in an active, creative, social and emancipatory way. Our primary schools make use of different working methods and modern media.

Secondary education: 12 to 18 years

Once a youngster starts secondary education, he can opt either for a general or for a more technical training, as well as for specific art or vocational education. Pupils are constantly coached during the learning process and aided in their choice of the appropriate subjects for study. For they will have to make a choice sooner or later: either go on studying or start a working career. In short, GO's secondary education leads to maturity and adulthood and prepares for life after the age of eighteen.

From the age of 15 or 16, youngsters can opt for part-time professional education (sandwich courses). They go to school part-time (15 hours/week) and work part-time as well, performing tasks that tie in with what they are learning. It helps them to develop the attitudes they need to be successful in the world of employment.

We always keep our finger on the pulse of the labour market and the world of business and industry. Close cooperation between schools and companies is stimulated all the time.



Special education

GO!'s special education offers tailor-made solutions in a specialised environment for children and youngsters with learning and/or behavioural difficulties, or a physical, sensory or intellectual handicap. We focus on the individual's abilities, rather than his or her limitations.

Inclusive approach

Since 1 September 2015, primary and secondary pupils with slight mental disabilities or learning disorders can follow classes more easily in regular education. This is thanks to the so-called M decree, which consists of measures that enable students with special educational needs to register and remain in regular education.

The M Decree follows the principle of 'regular education if possible, special education if necessary'. Schools must carry out 'reasonable adjustments' in order to successfully mainstream these pupils into regular education.


According to GO! this decree is an important step towards real inclusive education which in turn leads to a more inclusive society. Our schools are given intense support in the implementation of the necessary measures.

Part-time art education: 6 to 99 years

Besides the obligatory educational curriculum, both young and old can find an artistic outlet in our part-time art schools. Courses such as Expressive Language, Music and Dance appeal to a broad audience and fit in perfectly with our concept of lifelong learning. Part-time art education is accessible to children, youngsters and adults, artists and art lovers.

Adult education: 16 to 99 years

From the age of 16, anyone eager to learn is welcome in our centres for adult education, where they can enrol for numerous courses. The modular system enables them to fix their own training schedule and so determine how much time they need.





Curricula

The decision about what final attainment levels should be pursued by schools and teachers all over Flanders and in the Brussels-Capital Region, lies with the Flemish Government. Every education network is allowed to translate these levels into a curriculum. GO! creates and develops its own very unique and specific curricula, that are different from those initiated by the municipal providers or the Catholic network. Nevertheless, all curricula have to be approved by the Flemish Minister of Education in order to ensure that final attainment levels are achieved.

Our curricula are based on certain principles that are of essence to GO!: active and constructive learning, focus on broad education, extended care and cohesion. The core values of our educational project are also translated into concrete targets and tips.

All teachers of GO! must fully master the curricula that are relevant to their subject(s) and personal practice in the classroom.



Learning together how to live together

Through our educational project we train children and youngsters to discover that philosophical, ideological and religious questions cannot be answered by one unique, universal truth. And that above all we all have to learn to live together despite our differences in opinion. 'Learning together how to live together' has been defined as a key mission for everyone at GO!.

What matters most here is that everyone is free to make his or her own choices and look at things with a critical eye. This openness implies that we leave room for doubt and mistakes, that children and youngsters are allowed to ask questions all the time and that they acquire the skills they need to develop a critical attitude.

An enquiry among our professionals revealed that equivalence, mutual respect, strong commitment, openness, freedom of thought and critical introspection are still primary values.



The Belgian Constitution has entrusted GO! with the task of offering 'neutral' education. But the meaning of 'neutral' has very much changed and amplified over the years. Nowadays schools are facing the challenges related to the 'super diversity' of our society. That is why GO! has chosen an active form of neutrality.

Neutrality means that we do not value one specific opinion more than others. No philosophical, ideological, or religious conviction prevails, they are all equivalent. The dialogue is far from optional.

There is no question of being right or wrong. We teach our pupils to create openness by pointing out that the partners in dialogue should talk on an equal footing, and that they should show mutual respect.

Being a member of a society is what we call citizenship. Citizenship is about

- democracy, where citizens are positively approached by society, despite conflicting interests and powers;
- participation, requiring strong involvement and commitment to society from every citizen;
- identity, which relates to the interaction between personal freedom and one's environment.

In all these fields, but surely also in their personal lives, we want our pupils to learn to live together, so that they can become active citizens. We teach them the basic values of the democratic society: respect for other people's convictions, the freedom to make philosophical, ideological and religious choices of their own, the equivalence of man and woman and the equivalence of all the people, regardless of their differences.

GO! welcomes people of all convictions and respects their particularities as long as they respect the laws of our country, dedicate themselves to the application of human and children's rights and are strongly committed to our basic educational values and targets. Our educational project is the common thread that guides us in our efforts to learn and teach how we must live together.

Components for learning how to live together


Foundations of active citizenship

Respect: to be achieved as well as to be expected

Respect is a core value in the overall GO! policy. Respect for oneself, for the unique personality of others, for everyone's disposition, colour of skin, origin, conviction, philosophy or religion, for gender, for the disabled, respect by youngsters for the elderly, for nature and our environment, for the classroom material or for the equipment in the practice room.

Respect at work, among colleagues, for the principal, by pupils and their parents for teachers and vice versa.

Active citizenship is taught in our schools always and everywhere, through educational projects and also in the classroom, on the playground or during excursions. Active citizenship is impossible if there



is no respect. Learning how to live together implies reciprocity: everyone should be respectful towards other people. Active citizenship is about justice and equality. Democracy needs active citizens.

Participation: a means of triggering emancipation and commitment

All our collaborators, no matter where they work, are free to take part in the decision-making process. Through online inquiries, social media, workshops etc. we invite them regularly to speak their minds on educational issues.

School and parents form a solid twosome, sharing responsibilities, talking and listening to each other on an equal footing, joining efforts to safeguard the pupil's well-being and positive development. We enable parents to participate on a management level, through school councils and boards of governors within each group of schools. They are also free to join the specific parents' association attached to the school, which organises all kinds of activities to raise extra funds.

Pupils have their own council in which to discuss the school's policy. Some schools also harbour a youth parliament, a forum, or work groups, focus groups, discussion rounds, and so on. In addition there is the school's website where they can express their opinion, or the notice board, the school newspaper, the box of ideas, and so on.



How do we make it work?

Foundations of active citizenship

Active citizenship

What is learned in the cradle is carried to the tomb. In our schools, this saying is put into practice every single day. From a very early age - already in the kindergarten - pupils are made aware of their responsibilities in numerous aspects of life.


Healthy eating habits, sufficient physical exercise, caring for the environment and nature, safely taking part in traffic (walking or biking), safely using the internet and other digital tools, respectfully interacting with other people, thinking and acting in a democratic way: all this is an integral part of the extended education that is offered by our schools.

Values

Mutual respect, openness, equivalence, sincerity, involvement and commitment: those are the basic values that we teach in our schools and other facilities, so that children and youngsters can grow into active citizens. Citizens who show their commitment towards building a super diverse society worth living in.

Day after day, our professionals engage in connecting convictions, cultures and people, teaching children and youngsters how to live together, thus shaping a peaceful and sustainable future.

In our schools active citizenship is a shared value on every level. The laws of our country are respected, everyone is dedicated to the application of human rights and mutual respect. Everyone is willing and eager to pass on the basic values of our educational project to colleagues, children, youngsters and parents.

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Equal chances for everyone

GO! ensures that everyone, without distinction, gets equal chances for personal development. Prejudices are curtailed. Cooperation is stimulated.

The school must ensure that every child is given the same chances to receive the best possible education. Every teacher is entrusted with accomplishing this mission. Our school teams are the guarantors of this.

Not all children start going to school carrying the same (social, cultural) 'rucksack'. Socially deprived children find it harder to meet the school's expectations. More than any other children, they may experience disadvantages in learning, and are more likely to double a school year and to leave school too early. We recommend that children go to school as early as possible. The earlier they start within a well-structured environment, the more opportunities they will get to succeed and grow into balanced and harmonious people.

Components for equal chances

Quality comes first!

Our school teams strive towards high-quality education for everyone.

Quality has to do with the ability to develop all the skills and talents of every pupil and student. It also involves full development of personalities and broad development of children into individuals that are able to live together as active citizens in our democratic society.

Our Educational Guidance Service offers external assistance to educational institutions, develops initiatives to improve the quality of the education offered by those institutions and stimulates initiatives that strengthen the professional development of its staff members. Its mission is to guide our schools to achieve their own teaching and learning challenges and to become professional learning organisations, with a strong sense of policy-making. Schools must develop their own specific vision of quality, through self-evaluation and policy-making. Throughout this process, the Educational Guidance Service will act as a critical partner.





Quality care with regard to the education that we offer is the common thread that runs through our overall policy. Non-stop quality care enables us to maintain what is good and to make improvements where necessary. It is our guarantee for a constant high-quality standard in education.

Everyone's a VIP

At GO!, no one is considered a number. Everyone is a true VIP, meaning a 'versatile and interesting personality'. For each of them, 'VIP' represents something different, accurately summarising their personality, both on an IQ level and on an EQ level.

All pupils are approached as unique persons, valuable participants with specific ambitions, interests and talents who actively take part in the classroom activities. Thanks to this 'VIP' treatment, everyone at school gets a sense of 'belonging'.


Everyone is unique, we are all equal in dignity. The particularities of every individual learner have to be respected, regardless of the situation. We strive for equal development opportunities for everyone. Customised support helps to lessen or eliminate restrictions and learning deficits. On the other hand, every learner is also challenged and stimulated to use and further develop his or her talents.

Talent makes the difference

Talent is more than just the ability to understand. Talent is not only about having a flair for mathematics or languages. There is also the talent for creating things, and talents in the field of arts, music or sports. Social and emotional intelligence is equally valued in our present society, as well as the talent for steering one's personal development or that of others.

Talent can be discovered and developed through exercise and is further enriched through relevant experiences. That is exactly what our school teams do: educating young people to develop their capacities to the fullest. That is why we strive towards an educational system that allows us maximally to encourage the development of talents.

Talent, ambition and interests of the individual pupil should be the primary criteria in the choice of his/her study orientation.



Competence is a plus

The demands of the 21st century society have become increasingly complex. The citizens of tomorrow will have to be able to solve complex situations, be it in their private lives, in social life, or in a working or studying environment. Step by step, they will have to acquire and develop these competences (knowledge, skills, attitudes) at school.

That is why more attention is paid to learning skills, technical skills, financial and digital literacy, media insight, initiative and a sense of entrepreneurship, social skills and active citizenship, and the like. In addition, final attainment levels are converted into competences and skills. These competences and skills must also be formulated in an ambitious way.

Social Mix is a Duty

Every school aims at achieving a social mix of its own within its walls: pupils from different backgrounds, be it on a socio-economic, ethnical, or cultural level; courses are attended in an atmosphere of companionship and understanding. This way, the school becomes a training ground where young people learn how to deal with all facets of a diversified society in a positive, realistic and safe way. Which will help them shape a positive, open and tolerant society.

Class groups should be as heterogeneous as possible: a mix of well performing and poorly performing pupils, pupils with different learning levels, pupils from different fields of study or from different years (within one and the same grade), etc. All these different talents are treated equally. Differentiation in working methods is applied, so that every talent can be brought to expression. As a result, both 'well-off' and socially deprived pupils acquire greater learning opportunities and, consequently, also better perspectives for their future lives.



How do we make it work?

Differentiate, excel, innovate

Differentiate

Every pupil is unique, different and has his/her own specific talents, interests and ambitions. The teacher's mission is to assess these differences positively and to turn them into unique development opportunities for each individual pupil. We set high standards for every pupil. That is why pupils will be given tasks that suit their capabilities, while at the same time the teacher will make every effort to bring them to a higher level.

Differentiation means: remediation for those who need it, and further deepening for pupils who master the basic study material very well. This is a key notion in our striving towards equal education opportunities for every pupil.

Excel


We expect our pupils and teachers to excel. Our pupils must be able to excel in fields that best match their own capabilities.

Striving towards maximum learning benefit, stimulating maximum development of (cognitive and non-cognitive) skills, offering a maximum of chances: that is the essence of excellent, high-quality education. It makes learning into something pleasant and it leads to better results.

Innovate

GO! has always played a pioneer role as far as innovation is concerned and wants to continue to do so, both with regard to the education offered and with regard to the practical approach, by constantly inspiring our school teams.

GO! actively prepares the school of the future by taking innovating initiatives that further enhance the quality of our education and that give children and young people a chance to acquire positive learning experiences, thus enabling them to develop themselves continuously. As a result, they will find their place and feel at home in tomorrow's society. In other words: GO! promotes an education that looks ahead.



Extended School

Children and young people develop themselves while interacting with their environment, both at school and in their leisure time. This is why our schools enable their pupils to get into contact with neighbouring enterprises, associations and organisations, challenging the youngsters to develop their sense of entrepreneurship and talents in a real-life setting as well as to further broaden and deepen the competences they acquired in school. Thus they experience a broad range of practices as well in life as in learning. This kind of cooperation is what makes our schools into Extended Schools, in other words: networks of accessible and high-quality facilities for children, parents and neighbours, with the school standing at the core for the pupils' learning and living.

Extended schools open their doors widely for young and old, both during the day and in the evening, thus turning into a meeting place that may further evolve into a true neighbourhood centre.

Pupil counselling

Centres for pupil counselling are affiliated to the school groups and officially acknowledged by the government. They offer support (information, advice and counselling) to pupils, parents, teachers and school principals in their efforts for growth and optimal development and for more well-being on their premises. They also play an important role in the interaction between pupils, parents, the school and welfare or health organisations.

They focus on four aspects:

- learning and studying
- school career and compulsory education guidance
- preventive health care
- mental health and social behaviour

The child is always the focal point. Work is conducted with respect for everyone. Priority is given to pupils whose development or growth in learning is difficult, due to their home situation or social background. Whenever a problem occurs, the team will look for a solution, in close consultation with the pupil, the parents and the school.



Care

All the children have the right to receive tailor-made care. All the children are entitled to coaching adapted and adjusted to their own specific educational needs.

In every school, care coordinators, pupil coaches and staff members of the centre for pupil counselling work out suitable arrangements and learning methods, in close consultation with the parents and the child. The best possible care we can offer is a classroom practice that meets every pupil's needs.

Language teaching

In our schools Dutch is spoken as much as possible. Pupils with a different mother tongue should get acquainted with Dutch as much and as quickly as possible.

Foreign children and youngsters between five and eighteen years old who have just arrived in our country, and do not speak any Dutch but are attending school, are taken care of in so-called 'onthaalklassen' ('admission classes'), either full-time or for a number of hours, depending on their personal situation. Sometimes they may attend all the lessons in a regular class group.

Foreign adults can attend lessons of 'Dutch as a second language' (the so-called NT2) in one of our centres for adult education.



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