

Central Parent Council's Annual Report of 2022

The year 2022 felt the impact of the aftermath of COVID. Life gradually returned to normal. The COVID measures could slowly be scaled down, society opened up again and parents were welcome back in the groups at KinderRijk. Even though caution was called for, we were all delighted. It needs to be said, new challenges also came our way. Such as the increasing demand for childcare, while the sector is facing a staff shortage and high absenteeism (partly due to COVID). The parents and the sector are of course also affected by significant inflation. The Parents Council is the discussion partner of the chairman of KinderRijk's Board of Directors on relevant matters to the parents and the children at all the locations. In this capacity, we regularly discussed the consequences of the above developments for KinderRijk: what are the (staffing) measures implemented by the organisation in order to make sure that the groups remain open as much as possible? How is KinderRijk absorbing inflation and what is its impact on rates and maintaining access to childcare? How was the situation with sick leave and the mental state of staff? And how can we increase parental participation? The fact is that every day during weekdays, a large team of enthusiastic, passionate KinderRijk staff is ready to provide the best quality care to our children. Wonderful! Of course, there has also been plenty of focus on other topics. We would like to give you a summary of our year and what we have done to represent the interests of all children and parents at a central level.

Collaboration with education

The collaboration with education is still an item of concern. KinderRijk is not involved as a full partner in every matter and is often notified too late about any changes. The city has observed this as being an issue across the entire Amstelveen childcare sector and takes action where possible. Since the prioritised topic: 'collaboration with education' is very broad, KinderRijk asked parents what they considered to be relevant aspects in the collaboration with education through a client survey last September 2022. The results gave us great insights. A number of recommendations was formulated based on the results. One example is to ensure a smooth/better transfer from day care to after-school care: better information to parents on what after-school care entails and which schools KinderRijk collaborates with. KinderRijk continuously endeavours to achieve proper collaboration with education. After all, we are dealing with the same children. Childcare makes an essential social contribution in this respect, and this item must therefore be even better pointed out to the education sector.

Sexual development and education policy

Every child goes through sexual development as well as physical development. They discover their own bodies and the associated feelings and they ask questions about it. In order to enable educational staff to guide all children in their sexual development in an open, respectful and educationally responsible manner, the 'sexual development and education' policy document has been drawn up. This document describes how KinderRijk views and deals with sexual development and upbringing, the role of the educational staff member and how training and assurance take place. The policy aims to provide children with a physically and psychologically safe environment, with room for effective sexual development. The Central Parent Council was given the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft document in an advisory process and provided KinderRijk's Board of Directors with a positive recommendation.

Policy on sexually transgressive behaviour among children

Children's sexual behaviour is generally accepted within certain boundaries. However, those boundaries may be different for each person. This depends on the educational staff member's own values and standards, the values and standards of KinderRijk and/or the values and standards of the parents. The educational staff members and the location manager(s) must have and maintain discussions about this aspect. Sexually transgressive behaviour involves sexually-oriented attention expressed through non-verbal, verbal or physical behaviour, which can be both intentional and non-intentional. The Central Parent Council was presented with the new policy on the Sexual Transgressive Behaviour between Children through an advisory process. This document explains when behaviour is sexually transgressive, what preventive measures can be taken and how to communicate with and by children in relation to sexual behaviour. The policy also contains a step-by-step plan on how to act when identifying sexually transgressive behaviour. An indispensable policy, provided with a positive recommendation by the Parent Council.

Parental participation and communication

Parental participation is another key spearhead for both KinderRijk and the Central Parent Council in 2022. A trusted, safe environment for our children to develop is the basis of competent childcare. KinderRijk takes its role as 'partner in parenting' very seriously. To this end, it is a necessity to maintain good and frequent contacts with parents and to work together. Partly since COVID, we have noticed that it is increasingly challenging to get parents to participate in considering issues related to the childcare locations. It is not easy to set up Parent Committees particularly at the half-day care and after-school care locations. At its meeting in February, the Parent Council therefore agreed to focus on improving communication on this subject in 2022 and to draw (even) further attention to the possibilities of parental participation within KinderRijk. The focus here was on communication about the tasks, role and added value of a Parent Committee (member), drawing more attention to the Parent Committee through visual material, newsletters and mailings (with the support from the location managers) and standardising the working method of the Parent Committees by providing them with several practical tools. We have made strides in this area, yet we will have to continue our joint efforts in 2023 to further increase parental participation based on our joint responsibility. We were forced to postpone the organisation of thematic meetings for parents for a while due to COVID, but the first plans are now in the works!

The year of Education

'Education' was one of the Parent Council's focal points also in 2022. In the field of Education, further major achievements were made in 2022. The Parent Council is continuously updated by the board on this crucial process and the developments from a parent perspective. The new educational vision and policy drawn up in 2021 were implemented in 2022. At the April meeting, Willemien Wildeboer, educationalist at KinderRijk, took us through all the items that her Education & Quality department is working on through a film and a presentation. Ranging from the organisation of an inspiring seminar for all the staff, an update of the quality manuals, furnishing the Digital KinderRijk Academy for staff, to a pilot of new programme makers focusing on a good range of activities at day care and after-school care. The Central Parents' Council is enthusiastic about these developments and encourages KinderRijk to make the developments (even) more visible to the parents. After all, this is what parents want to see. In 2023, this theme will have a good follow-up on the annual calendar of Education & Quality.

Abolition of the points system

In September 2022, the points system was abolished. This was a system that had been set up as an extra 'service' to parents for accruing a number of points (= catch-up days) for lost care days, due to illness, holidays or other reasons. Although the Central Parent Council would have liked to keep the points system in place, there were reasons to recognise that the system was no longer tenable, such as the full groups, the staffing shortage that resulted in too little flexibility and the lack of perspective in the short term, and therefore a positive recommendation was issued.

New chairman of the KinderRijk board of directors

In September 2022, Margreet Hellemons-van Dijk started as the new chairman of KinderRijk's Board of Directors. A first meeting with the entire Parent Council was held in October. The Central Parent Council has been pleased with the initial months of collaboration.

Evaluation of the 'Parent Council as an independent advisory body'

The Central Parent Council has been functioning as an independent advisory body for over a year now. The council consists of a permanent group of members (parents) who represent the interests of all parents and children at KinderRijk, focusing on the central policy. Last October, the council evaluated the new structure. The overall impression is that the steady composition works very pleasantly. The members know each other and are all aware of what is going on and what was discussed previously. This in contrast to the previous situation, when the Parent Committees had varying representation and therefore little continuity and strength. The new situation provides a better opportunity to go into depth/factual details. As for professionalisation, it has therefore been useful to separate the Parent Council from the Parent Committees. However, the Parent Council is still looking for the best way to stay connected to the Parent Committees. We find that the degree of involvement of the Parent Committees varies greatly, and communication is sometimes difficult or non-existent. As a result, some locations lack input, whereas the

Parent Council intends to represent all parents. Working on the improvement of the visibility of the Central Parent Council and Parent Committees is a task for us all. We will ask the location managers for assistance in achieving this task.

Rates for 2023

In mid-August 2022, the Parent Council and the Parent Committees which had not authorised the rates, received a request for their opinion on the proposed change to the rates from 1 January 2023. The rates committee had a good discussion with KinderRijk's Board of Directors in which the proposed rate increase (partly due to high inflation) was explained. The efficiency and sustainability measures showed a positive development and we were pleased to see that KinderRijk was willing to use its own resources to take on some of the unavoidable costs (e.g. rising wage costs). Based on this confidence, the Central Parent Council gave a positive opinion as well as the Parent Committees without authorisation.

Annual meeting of the Central Parent Council and delegates of the Parent Committees

On 18 November 2022, the second annual meeting was held with the members of the Central Parent Council and delegates from seven Parent Committees who attended the meeting. Unlike last year, this year's meeting was held live at KinderRijk's Service Centre, allowing us to meet physically. Willemien Wildeboer, educational manager at KinderRijk, explained and demonstrated how KinderRijk's educational policy is developed. How the teams work on this and how this is reflected in the locations. An inspiring contribution! The meeting also reflected on the cooperation between the Central Parent Council and the Parent Committees. The input received from the Parent Committees is most valuable for the Central Parent Council. Acting together and maintaining direct communication creates a valuable partnership with each having their own tasks and responsibilities. Finally, we looked ahead together and received input on the spearheads for 2023. All in all, we look back on a very successful meeting that is now a permanent item on the Parent Council's annual calendar.

Exercise policy

The proper development of children's motor skills and educational staff knowing how to assist and encourage children to exercise in a variety of ways is a highly valued aspect at KinderRijk. As no policy had yet been established in this respect and staff members need to be provided with information, guidelines and agreements, an exercise policy was drawn up. The aim of the exercise policy is to clarify how KinderRijk contributes to a healthy lifestyle by including exercise activities in the daily programme. With some additional suggestions, the Central Parents' Council issued a positive recommendation.

Work instructions for 'Ommetje' ages 0 to 4, After-school care outings and Safely from school to after-school care

The abovementioned work instructions have been revised to bring them in line with the applicable statutory regulations regarding the educational staff/children ratio. The work instructions were moreover reviewed for readability, topicality and feasibility in practice. For example, the work instructions for the after-school care outings include that swimming in natural water is no longer allowed due to health and safety risks. A positive opinion was issued on this topic as well.

In short, we look back on a year when many things happened. Would you like to know more about one of the topics above, about the Parent Committee at your location or the Central Parent Council? Feel free to drop by your location manager or send an e-mail to ouderraad@kinderrijk.nl.