

## **CASE 'Rosaly'**

Description of the drop-out prevention strategy in Den Helder, the Netherlands

### **Pupil**

The pupil is a 14-year-old girl, called Rosaly. She is of average intelligence and up to the age of 13 all was well at school and at home.

### **Parents**

Both parents work, the mother part-time. They form an average, well-meaning family without any specific problems.

### **Trouble getting started**

At the beginning of the school year, Rosaly started playing truant, was loud-mouthed, resisted teachers and was alleged to use drugs.

Results at school gradually declined.

She had little contact with her parents, went out a lot and returned home late. She seemed to be under the influence of the wrong kind of friends, which might have had the wrong influence on her. It seemed that the parents were losing grip on Rosaly.

### **Identifying**

Her increasing absence attracted the attention of the educational care taker. The school contacted the parents by telephone.

Through the class register, the mentor saw that her absence was increasing and that there were a lot of problems with Rosaly. (Through the class register, increasing absence can be seen as well as how many times Rosaly was late, forgot her books or was sent out of the classroom. It is unknown whether there were 'a lot of' problems' in this case).

### **Actions**

The mentor invited Rosaly for a talk, but she did not show up.

Once or twice, the mentor contacted the parents by telephone.

Meetings took place with Rosaly, her parents and the mentor.

The situation did not change.

Then Rosaly and her parents were invited for a talk with the mentor, the deputy head and the special needs coordinator.

Parents and Rosaly were asked about the reason for her behaviour and the school explicitly expressed their concern. The consequences of Rosaly's behaviour were explained. They were told that if her behaviour would not change and her presence at school would remain below the required standard, this might lead to suspension, expulsion and reporting to the municipal school attendance officers. The school was of the opinion that Rosaly's problems were so serious that they were advised to contact the Youth Care Agency.

The situation did not improve. Rosaly kept having difficulties with many teachers and she was often absent.

The parents and Rosaly were subsequently invited for another talk with the deputy head and the special needs coordinator.

Initially she was suspended for a day, which may become 3 to 5 days.

The case was discussed by the external school advisory team. They concluded that assistance and the school attendance officers had to be brought in.

According to the required procedure, the school attendance officers received a report and invited Rosaly and her parents for a talk.

Rosalyn stated that she did not have a problem, but that the school did. She was angry and did not want anything. The risks of her behaviour, now and in the future, were pointed out to her. Teachers did not want her in their classes. Through a cooperation contract / agreement between the school and Rosaly, she could make her school work in the school library. So she could show that she was able to behave herself.

In advance, the school attendance officers informed the Youth Care Agency of the situation. When the parents would contact the Youth Care Agency and would only tell them that the school attendance officer had told them to do so, the agency would know what is wrong and what kind of demand of care to expect.

The school attendance officers advised the parents to contact the Youth Care Agency, but they had to do it themselves.

If parents refuse to contact the Youth Care Agency, the school attendance officers can ask advice from the Advice and Reporting Centre for Child Abuse and Neglect (AMK). After they receive a report in writing, the AMK will start an investigation. If they consider the situation to be serious it is reported to the Child Protection Council. If not, the AMK will not undertake any action.

The Youth Care Agency kept in touch with Rosaly, but she did not want anything, so youth care aimed at the whole family.

The intervention of the Youth Care Agency had no result, Rosaly kept playing truant.

Rosalyn was referred to the school safety net provision. She also played truant there.

As the intervention by the Youth Care Agency was unsatisfactory, she was reported to the Child Protection Council. An investigation was started and several organisations, which had dealt with Rosaly and her parents, were consulted.

In the meantime, the school attendance officer made a report of the offence, resulting in a compulsory parenting course. Rosaly had to attend the 'Roos'- project; by means of talks and role play, participants gain insight into the importance of education.

Through the guardian's interference with the parents and Rosaly, she thought the better of it and went to the Regional Training Centre (ROC), followed vocational education and obtained a diploma.

### **Summary of consecutive measures when no results are achieved**

#### **School:**

- Identify excessive absence
- Involve parents
- Inform and convince parents of the need to cooperate
- Point out to parents the consequences if their child's behaviour does not change
- Temporary suspension.

#### **External organisations:**

- Bring in external care givers
- Initially, assistance on a voluntary basis

- When there is no result compulsory interventions in the family by a guardian and sanction for parents and pupil
- Placement in a drop-out provision and leading towards vocational education or a combined working and learning route.