



CHILD'S VOICES IN DRAWINGS

CAROLINE VERBOOG



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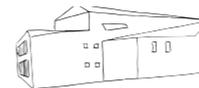
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INTRODUCTION

This booklet comprises drawings gathered from workshops conducted in primary schools that participated in my research as part of my graduation project, "Healthy Architecture for Children".

The drawing workshop were held in various schools to explore and compare the diverse perspectives of children regarding their school. Four schools, and approximately sixty children, participated in these workshops. During the sessions, children were prompted to create a drawing in response to one of the following questions:

- "What is your favourite place at school?"
- "What does your school look like?"
- "How would your ideal school look like?"

This deliberately chosen question, without any additional instructions or rules, granted children the ultimate freedom to draw anything that came to their minds. By letting the children draw, they have to translate their thinking through pen(cil) on paper. Children frequently draw from memory

and as such, their drawings were based off on things that left an impression on their minds. This led to children's drawings incorporating aspects of school that they found interesting or memorable. The drawing workshop provided insight into children's thinking, as they often find it easier to express themselves through drawing rather than talking.

An attempt was made to allow children to create drawings independently, free from influences by other children or adults. However, it was noticeable that drawings from children sitting next to each other often resulted in similar outcomes.

Acknowledging the drawings coupled with the tours facilitated by the children, coupled with their verbal explanation, provides a more comprehensive insight into both their drawings and the school. It's worth noting that they frequently include small details in their drawings.

Additional details about the various case study schools can be found in the main booklet of my thesis.

CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS

Pictures reveal the drawer's existence, thoughts, and inner self. The act of drawing is cherished because it taps into the universal desire to express oneself, liberating the heart in the process.

Children's drawings have long captivated the interest of professionals in education, psychology, and parenting. Through pencils, brushes, and paper, children navigate the world around them. The progression of drawing over time becomes a visual narrative of development and acquisition of greater intelligence. Drawing techniques offer a relatively straightforward technique for gathering social insights from and about children. While drawing is a form of individual expression, it also serves as a communicative tool, often conveying more to the observer than language alone. Children, who may not possess advanced abstract linguistic capabilities, utilize drawing as a symbolic means of communication.

Analyzing children's drawings has consistently served as a systematic means of evaluating their perceptions and

attitudes toward their surroundings. These drawings function as emotional indicators for specific environmental issues, shedding light on their attitudes in various environmental situations. Children, when drawing, meticulously select their materials—crayons, colors, patterns—and carefully consider the size and position of their creations. The uniqueness of children's drawings offers precise information about the young artist. Their drawings are considered a "window" into their inner worlds, providing glimpses into their thoughts and feelings, primarily because these drawings reflect images originating from their own minds. In the early stages, the themes of drawings are secondary, and the activities exist in a realm where psychological and physical elements seamlessly intertwine.

The development of children's drawings follows a progression, mirroring the advancement of motor skills, emotional growth, psychosocial development, and perception. Children draw "what they know" in their distinct style, with perception, emotions, and motor functions interacting (Farokhi & Hashemi, 2011).



**Early scribbling
(2-4 years)**

In the preoperational stage, children often engage in scribbling as a form of expression. These scribbles may not represent recognizable objects, but they signify the child's emerging ability to use symbols.



**Symbolic Representation
(4-7 years)**

As children enter the later part of the preoperational stage, they begin to create drawings that represent objects and people. However, these representations might lack certain details and proportions.



**Realistic Representation
(7 years and older)**

In the concrete operational stage, children become more capable of drawing realistically. They start to incorporate details, show a better understanding of spatial relationships, and may depict more complex scenes.

PARKSCHOOL



Class: Groep 3/4 ↑ Delft,
Age range: 6 - 8 years old The Netherlands

The Parkschool is located in a neighbourhood with a significant amount of children from migrant backgrounds. This is also reflected in their proficiency in the Dutch language. However, despite the occasional language barriers, a significant amount of children displayed a high level of talkativeness and enthusiasm in sharing stories and drawings about their school. The building is situated in the midst of a green, stretched out park, which also serves as the playground during lunch breaks. The building houses two primary schools and a gymnasium, often depicted in the children's drawings. Their drawings reflect their adoration for the gymnasium, playing elements, the quiet teacher's lounge, people at school, and the breakfast table for children with no financial possibility to eat breakfast at home.

In this school, the children had to create a drawing in response to the question:

"WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PLACE AT SCHOOL?"

DE BERGSE ZONNEBLOEM



Class: Groep 4 ↑ Rotterdam,
Age range: 7 - 8 years old The Netherlands

The Bergse Zonnebloem is situated in a prosperous neighbourhood in Rotterdam. The playground is shielded from the street, and nearly all classrooms overlook this central space. The prominent presence of the playground can also be observed in the children's drawings. When prompted with the question, "What does your school look like?" many depicted elements of play, the entire school, as well as unattainable places, such as the roof. Some children were influenced by an earlier question about drawing their ideal school, taking the liberty to slightly alter the question. Interestingly, these drawings provided valuable insights into the children's desires and wishes for their school environment.

In this school, the children had to create a drawing in response to the question:

"WHAT DOES YOUR SCHOOL LOOK LIKE?"
"WHAT DOES YOUR IDEAL SCHOOL LOOK LIKE?"

VRIJE SCHOOL WIDAR



Class: Leerlingenraad ↑ Delft,
Age range: 5 - 12 years old The Netherlands

The Vrije School Widar is situated in a decent neighbourhood in Delft. At this school, I had the opportunity to conduct the workshop with the "leerlingenraad", which comprises the student councils from each class. Around twelve children, between the ages of 5 to 12 years old, participated in both the workshop and the tour. A recurring theme of the drawings was the exterior playground and nature in general, aligning with the school's educational emphasis. Considering the range of ages within the group, I wanted to give them more freedom. I initiated the session with the standard question: "What does your school look like?". Additionally, I offered the children the option to sketch their ideal school, aiming to explore recurring fundamental elements across their drawings.

Thus, the children were given the option to create a drawing in response to the question:

"WHAT DOES YOUR IDEAL SCHOOL LOOK LIKE?"

MONTESSORI DELFT



Class: Groep 3/4/5 ↑ Delft,
Age range: 6 - 9 years old The Netherlands

The Montessorischool Delft is a child center for education and after school care. The building is situated in an ordinary neighbourhood, but has, in contrast to its concrete structure, a green environment surrounding the premises and the playground. The workshop was conducted with a group of children attending the after-school care program. Most of the children concentrated on specific exterior elements rather than the interior aspects of the school, with the exception of one child. This particular child was determined to obtain a school plan from the administrative assistant. Ideally, I had hoped the children would have paid more attention on the classrooms themselves, as they were carefully designed by the renowned architect Herman Hertzberger.

The children had to create a drawing in response to the question:

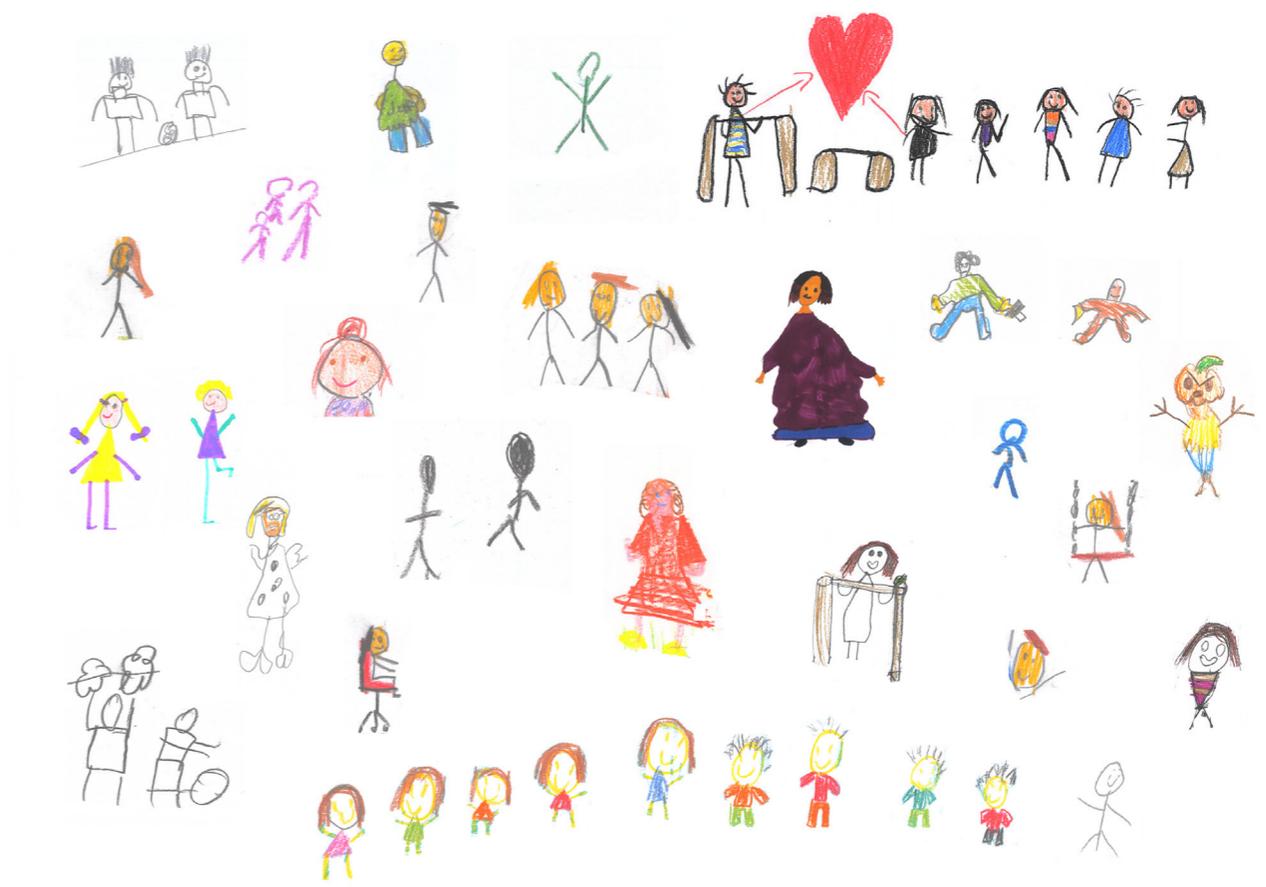
"WHAT DOES YOUR SCHOOL LOOK LIKE?"

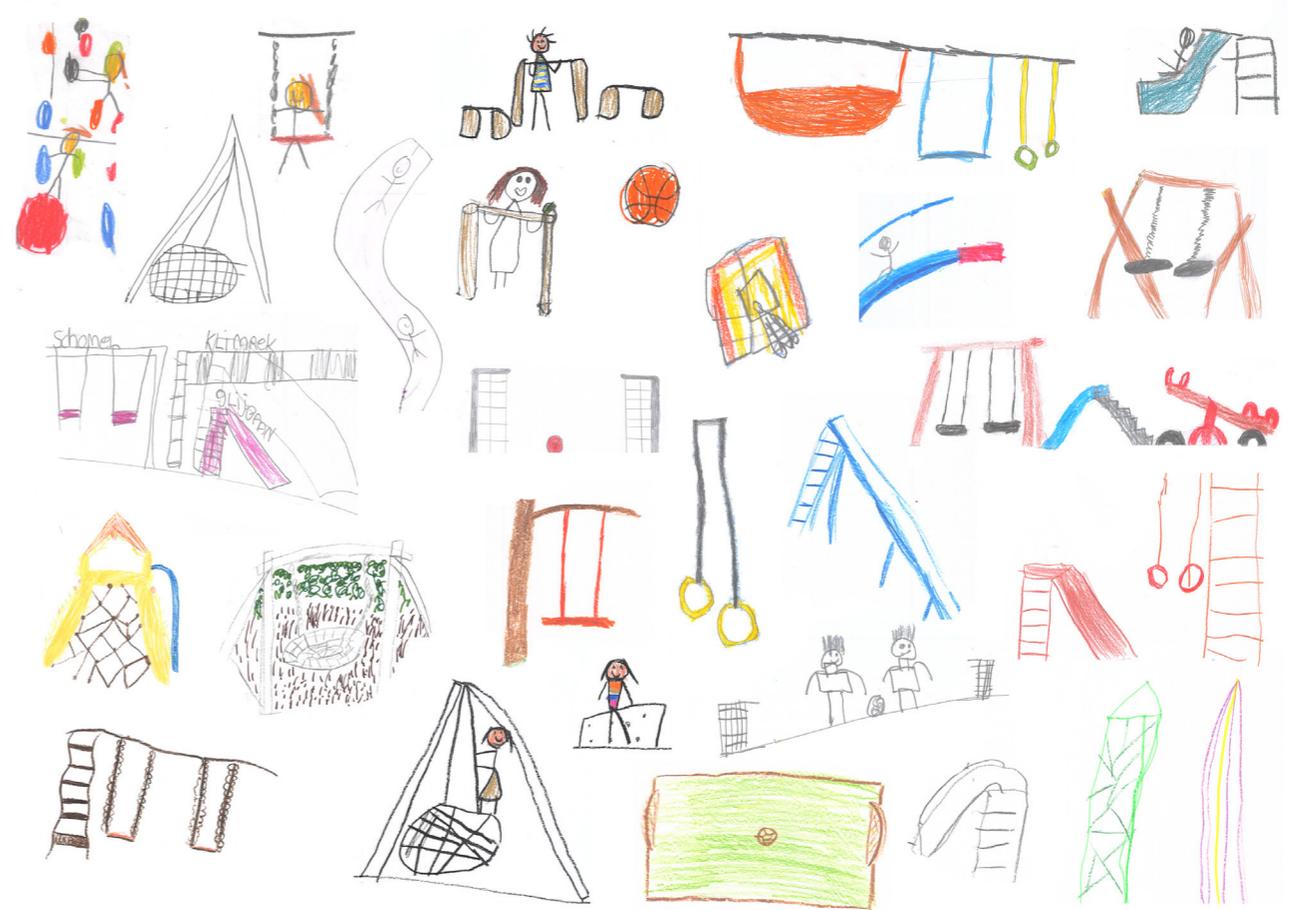
PARKSCHOOL



DE BERGSE ZONNEBLOEM







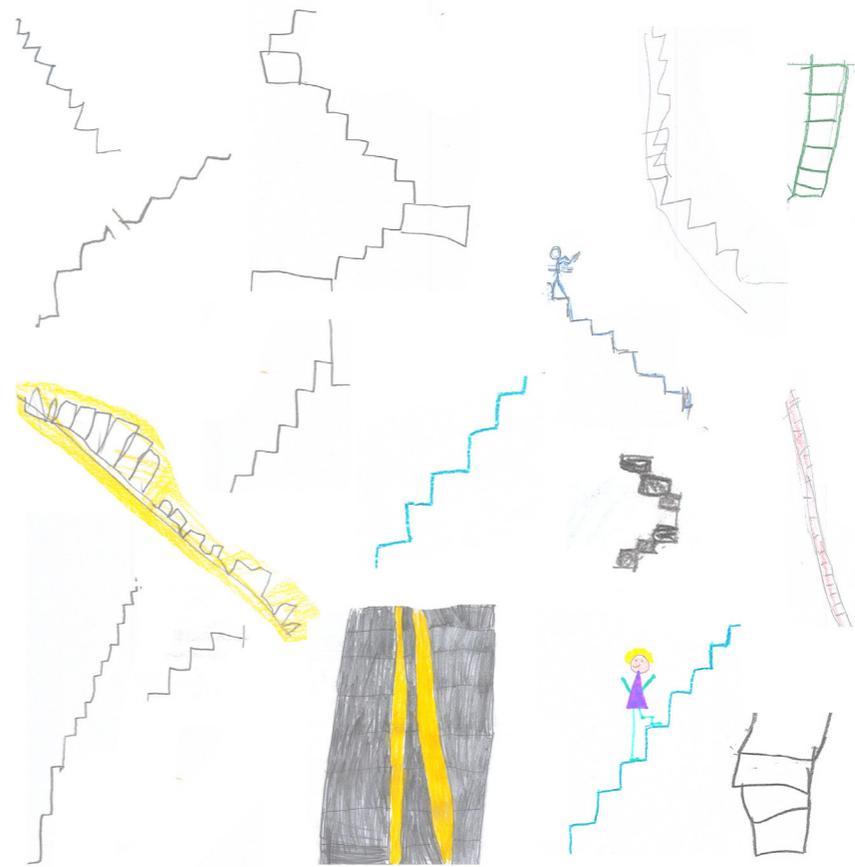


hier ~~de~~ well rok waneer



speeling
rekenen
TAAL
TAAL
PLANING

geheimplek



CONCLUSION

The exploration of children's drawings has proven to be a fascinating journey into the realm of their inner thoughts. It provided a unique "window" through which we gained valuable insights into their perceptions and experiences. The children in my target group exhibited drawings in the symbolic representation phase; they possessed the ability to create drawings that represented objects and people from memory.

This revealed elements and aspects that surfaced first in their minds, under the notion of "what they know," and were promptly translated onto paper. This visual medium emerged as a powerful tool, enabling swift and direct communication, particularly beneficial for engaging with reserved or reticent children without the need for exhaustive questioning.

While analyzing the drawings, various patterns and recurring elements emerged. This phenomenon wasn't exclusive to children within the same class, or workshop session, but was also observed across children from different schools. Specific spaces consistently appeared, as well as elements

such as stairs, people, playing devices etc. The drawings frequently distinguished four distinct spaces: the entire school, the schoolyard, the classroom, and the gymnasium.

Especially the classroom exhibited a distinct appearance. Often a bare rectangle housing a chair and a desk represented the conventional depiction of this learning space. Few other details emerged, except for an occasional schedule or board.

In contrast, the schoolyard was depicted with an abundance of (playing) furniture and natural elements. Children demonstrated a clear ability to distinguish such spaces, likely influenced by the recreational and vibrant nature associated with the schoolyard. The same observation applies to the gymnasium, where their drawings vividly recalled memories of sports elements. This tendency is also evident in drawings that incorporate a personal narrative or meaning, such as the drawings containing the breakfast table at the Parkschool.

Further observations, combined with observations during tours, unveiled children's profound connections with nature

and their keen identification of personal spaces within the school system. Some drawings depicted areas designated for active or upset children, highlighting their search for safe or calm spaces. The teachers' lounge in the Parkschool serves as an exemplary "retreat" space for children, being the only fully quiet area within their school.

Similarly, children lacking the freedom of choice at school, acknowledged the power of making their own decisions and expressed a desire to decide on their daily schedule.

This study not only enhanced the comprehension of children's cognitive and emotional landscapes but also underscored the universal nature of certain symbols and representations among diverse groups of children. The drawings functioned as a shared language and providing a collective expression of their perceptions, memories, and desires within the school environment.

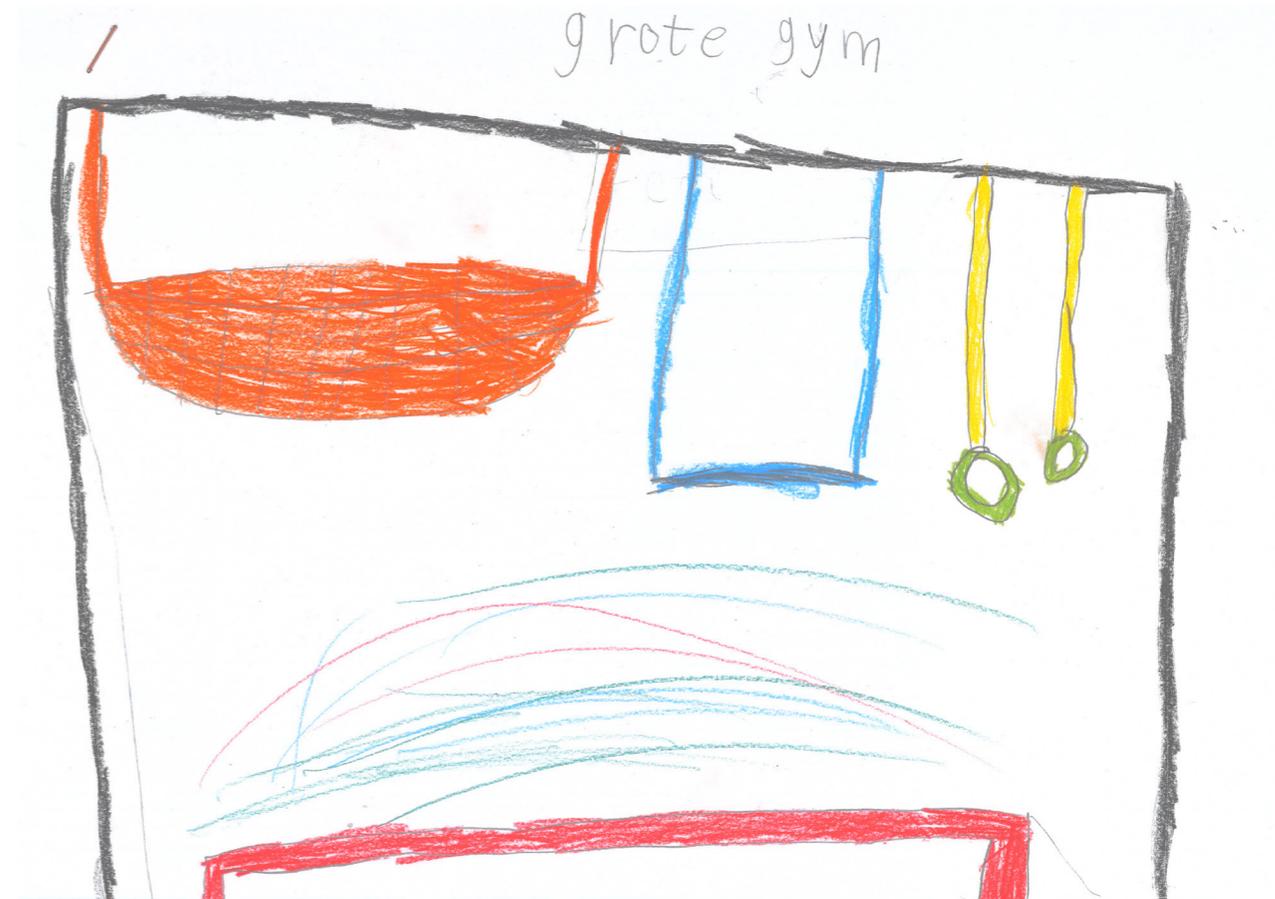
“Ik vind de trap mooi omdat de leuning één
van mijn lievelingskleuren in zit en dat is geel.
Omdat geel is voor de zon.”

- Anonymous



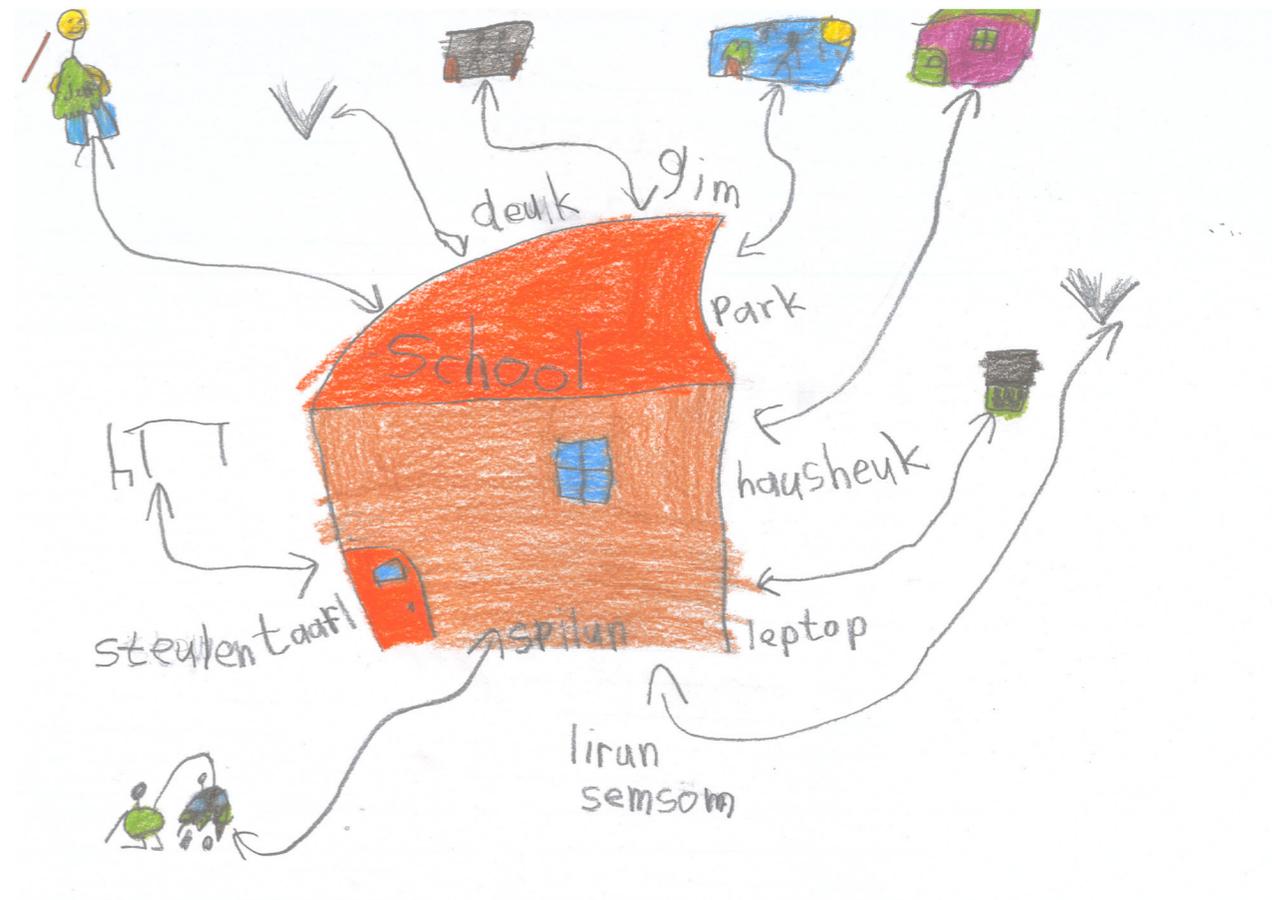
“Mijn favoriete plek op school is de gymzaal. Mijn lievelings dingen daar zijn de grote schommel en de hangers. Ik houd van die want dan kan ik zweven.”

- Anonymous



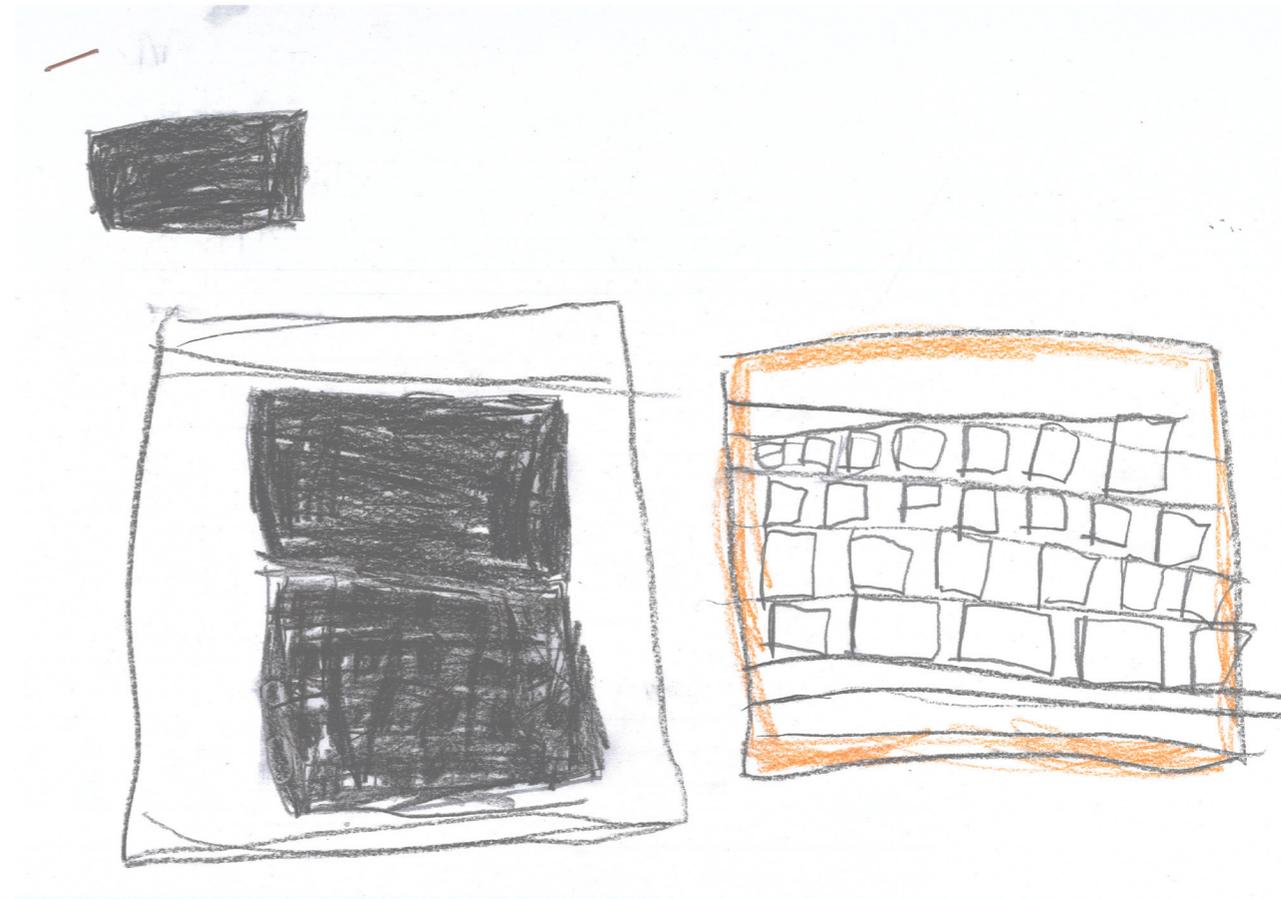
“Mijn favoriete ding op school is de juf en de gym, want de juf leert ons het meeste.”

- Anonymous



“Ik vind de laptop leuk want ik kan veel leren en ik het bord kan ik ook leuk vinden.”

- Anonymous



“Mijn lievelingsplek op school is de lerarenkamer,
want daar kan je rustig werken.”

- Henok, 7 years old



“Mijn lievelings plek is het voetbalveld. Omdat ik dan fit ben.”

- Armeen, 6 years old



“Ik weet niet wat mijn favoriete plek is in de school.”

- Asser, 7 years old



“Wat mijn favoriete plek in school is, is de gym.
Omdat het heel groot en leuk is en ik kan heel
hard rennen door de zaal en ik kan ook spelen.”

- Anonymous



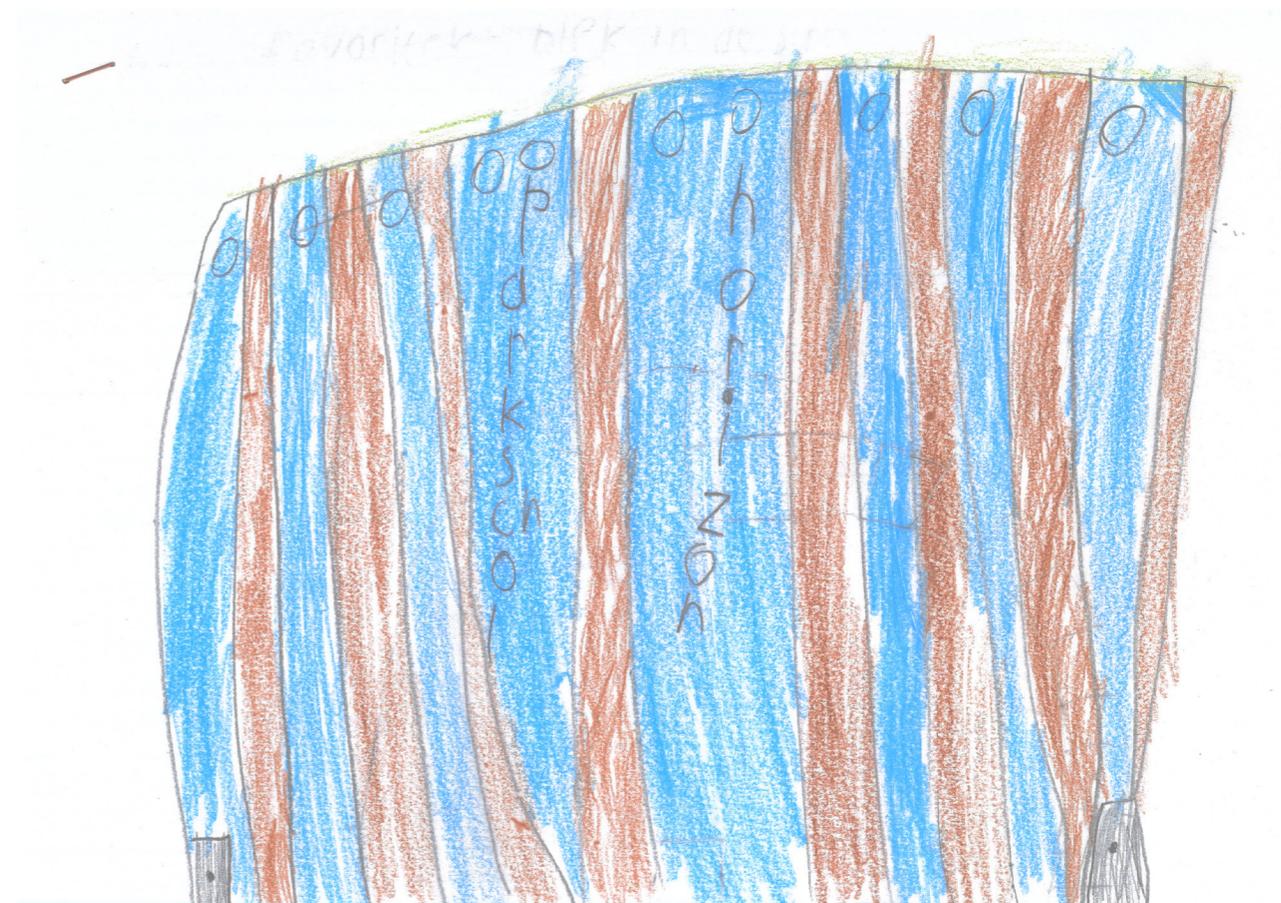
“Mijn favoriete plek is de gymzaal. Wil je weten waarom de gym mijn favoriete plek is? In de gym kan je sporten.”

- Anonymous



“Ik vind de buitenkant zo belangrijk. Want ze zeggen dat mijn huis zo lelijk is.”

- Anonymous



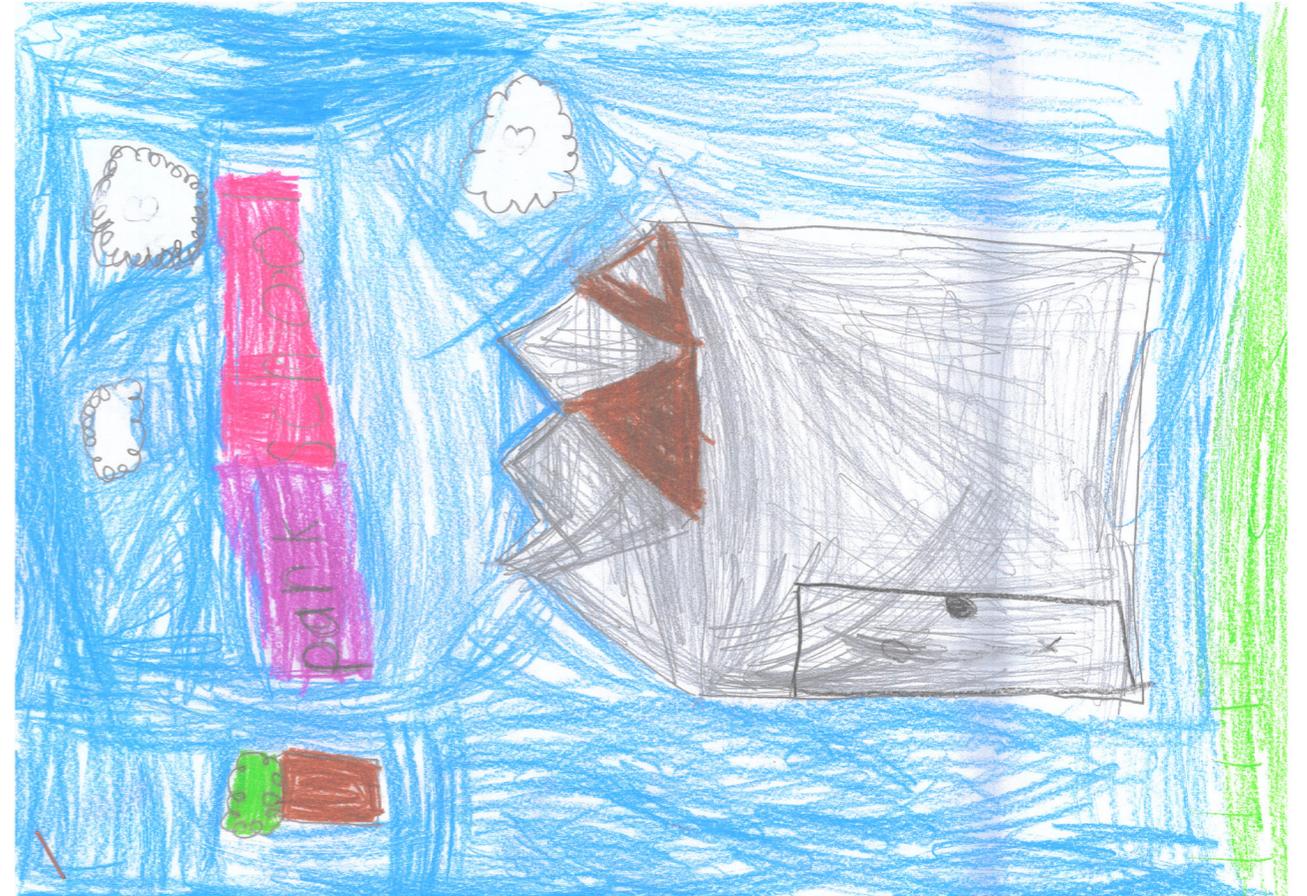
“Mijn favoriete plek in school is de buitenvoetbal, de gym, de huishoek en de siertuin omdat ik het leuk vind.”

- Anonymous



“Parkschool. Ik zit in groep 3/4 en mijn juf haar naam is Sophie.”

- Anonymous



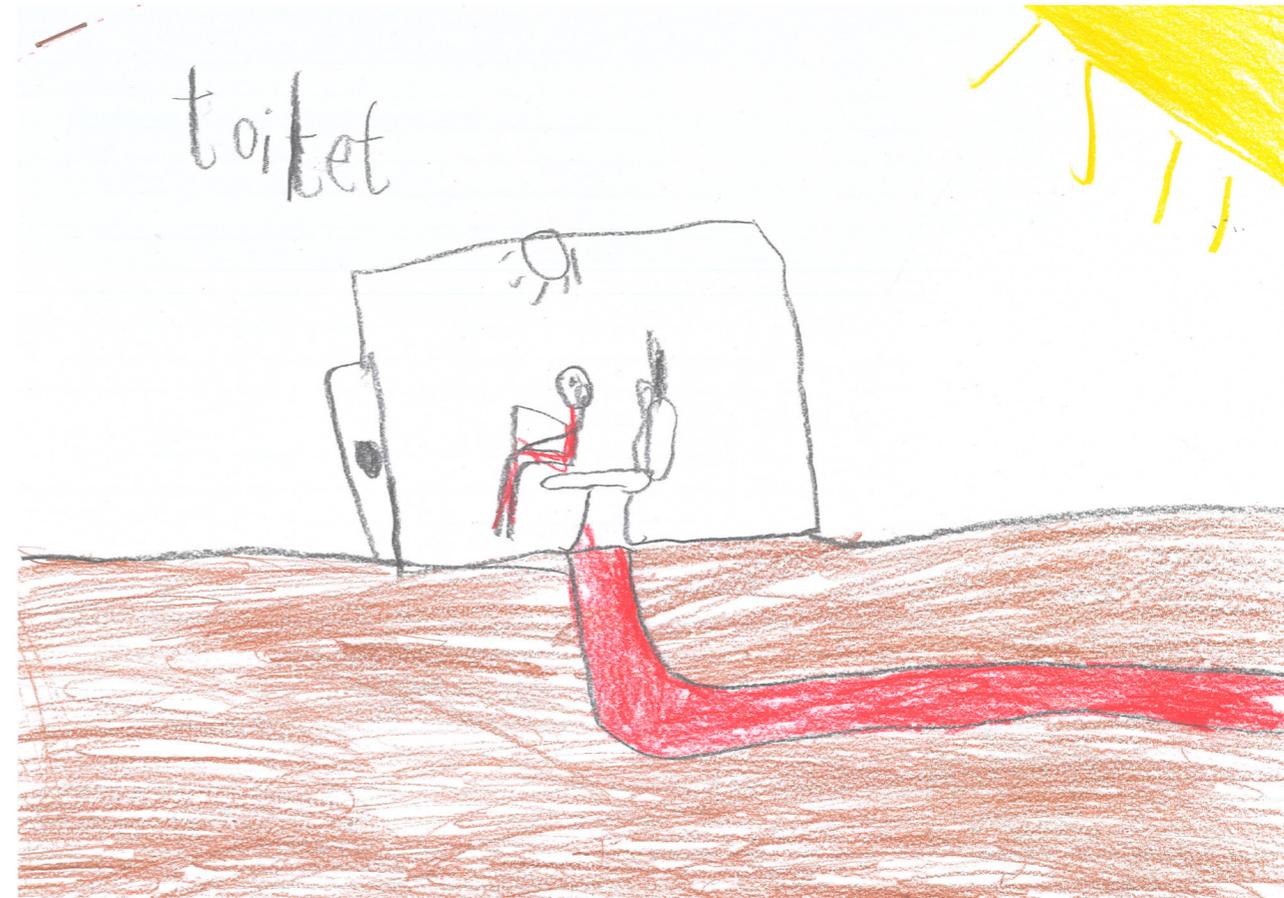
“Mijn favoriete plek in de school is de huishoek, omdat je daar kan spelen. De stomme plek is de klas omdat je er zit.”

- Anonymous



“Het toilet is heel belangrijk van de school, want elk uur gaat er iemand naar de WC. De WC is heel belangrijk van de school, want als de school geen WC heeft, is de school vies.”

- Anonymous



"Ik vind de hele school en alle plekken leuk. De school is leuk omdat ik houd van werken."

- Aoun, 7 years old



“Mijn favoriete plek is de teamkamer. Bij Juf Anja kan je lezen, leuk! Maar je moet wel luisteren. Maar het verhaal is ook fijn!”

- Satu, 6 years old



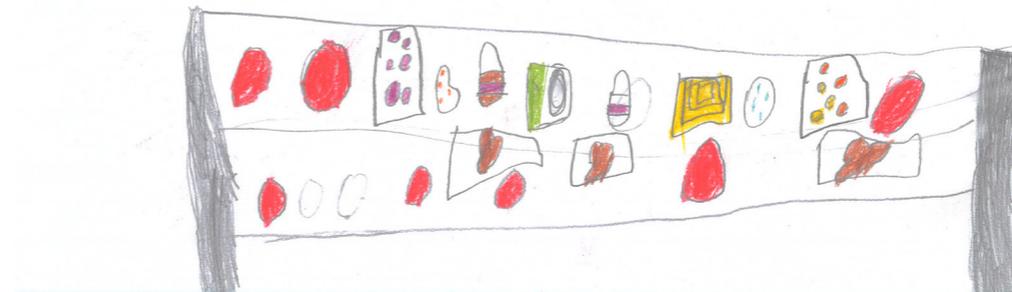
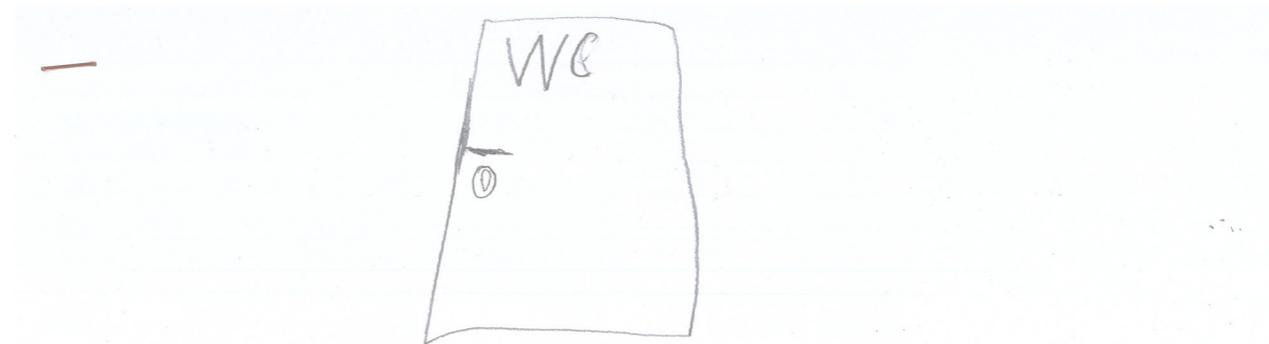
“Mijn lievelingsplek op school is de zandbak, want je kan heel veel dingen doen. Zoals een gat in het zand doen en je kan je voeten begraven en je kan zelf graven.”

- Vian, 8 years old



“De ontbijttafel is van kwart over 8 tot half 9. Dan moet je vaak om half 9 klaar zijn, maar nu wat anders. Ik zat een keer vast in de WC. Ik ging verstoppertje spelen en toen ging ik in de WC verstoppertje spelen. Ik deed de WC op slot en toen zat ik vast en ging ik schreeuwen “help help”. Mijn moeder ging mij helpen.”

- Shaliyan, 7 years old



“Ik ga iedere ochtend naar de hal. Ik neem altijd een cracker op mijn bord. We kunnen alleen in de ochtend ontbijten, het kan niet in de middag.”

- Azoa, 7 years old



“Ik hou van boeken en leren. De parkschool is leuk en ik houd van het ontbijt.”

- Raniq, 6 years old



“Soms doen kinderen heel druk of boos, dan zouden ze naar de rode kamer moeten. Ik wil naar de blijde kamer of de lucht kamer.”

- Anonymous



“Een voetbalveld voor de school en de klas met een neonbord.”

- Anonymous



“Hier kan je met de klimmuur naar boven en met de glijbaan van het dak af naar het speelplein.”

- Anonymous



"Het hoofd van slangenstandbeeld is hoger dan het dak."

- Rafael, 7 years old



“Het voetbal veld moet ook op het dak!”

- Anonymous

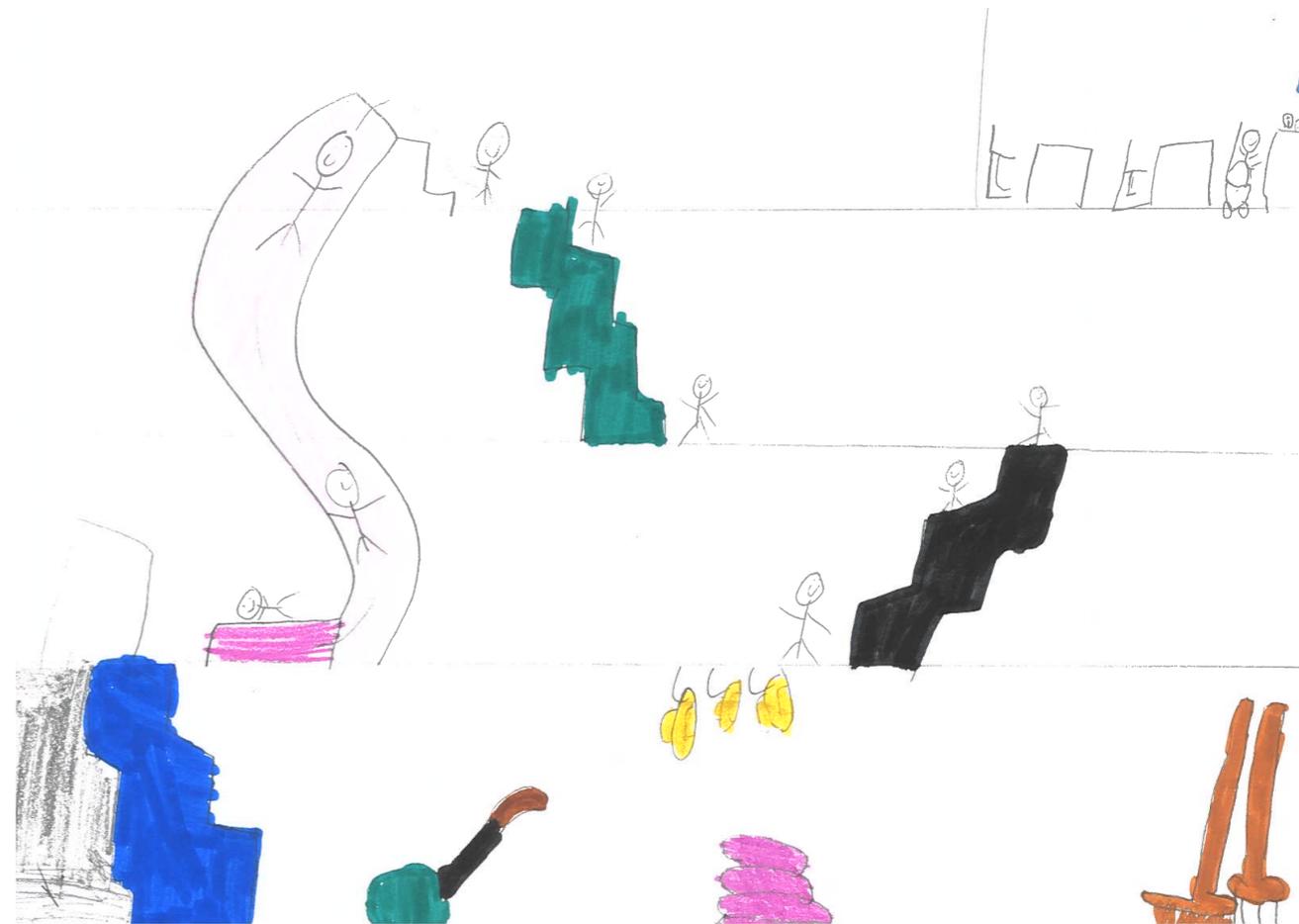


- Anonymous



“Een school waar je een glijbaan hebt een lekker
veel kleur.”

- Lou, 7 years old



“Een jungle waar je met dieren kan spelen.”

- Anonymous



“Een zwem en speel paradijs.”

- Anonymous



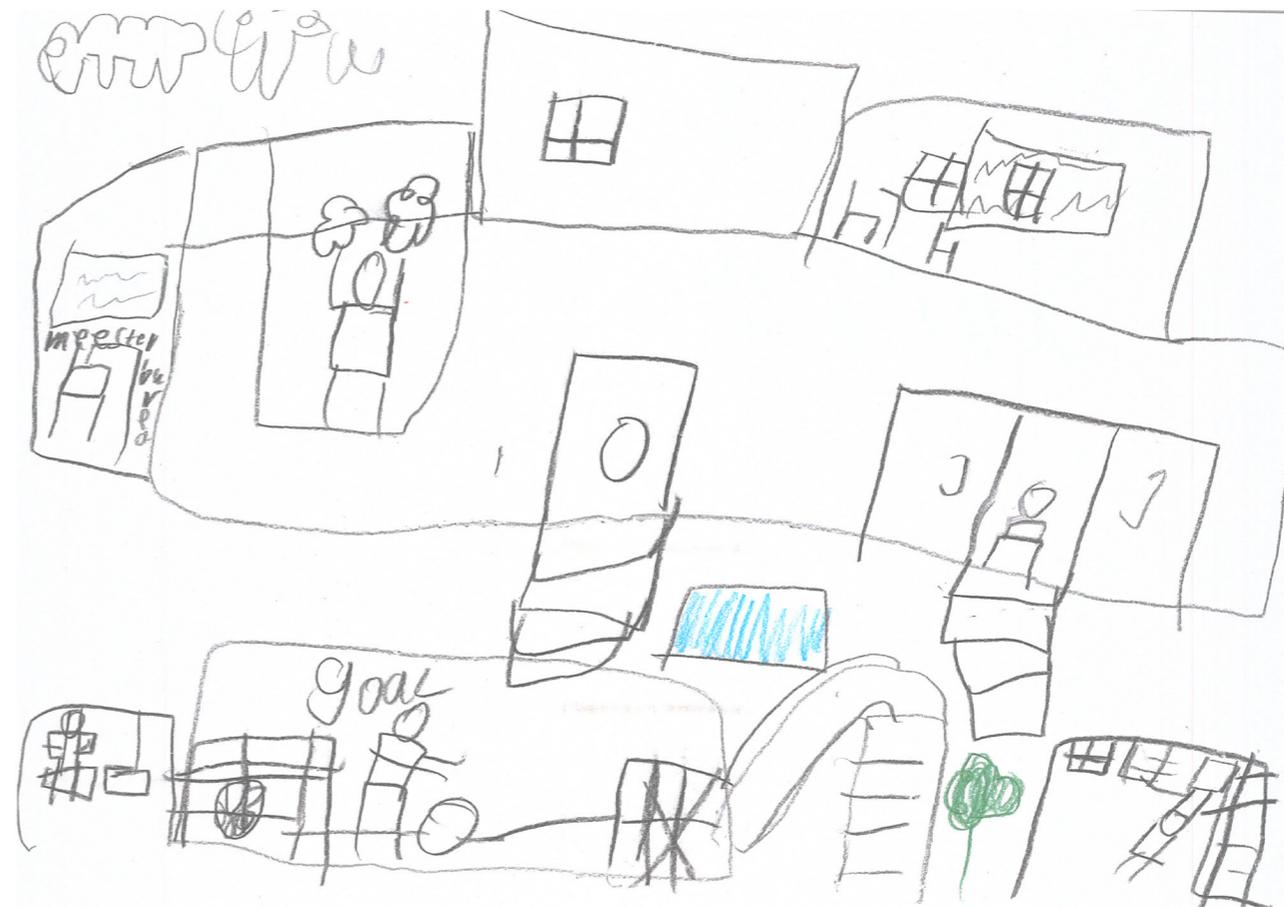
“Bistro, gras en een schommel voor de school.”

- Anonymous



“Het is een hele grote school en het heeft een klein zwembadje en een voetbalveld. Ook extra natuur!”

- Anonymous



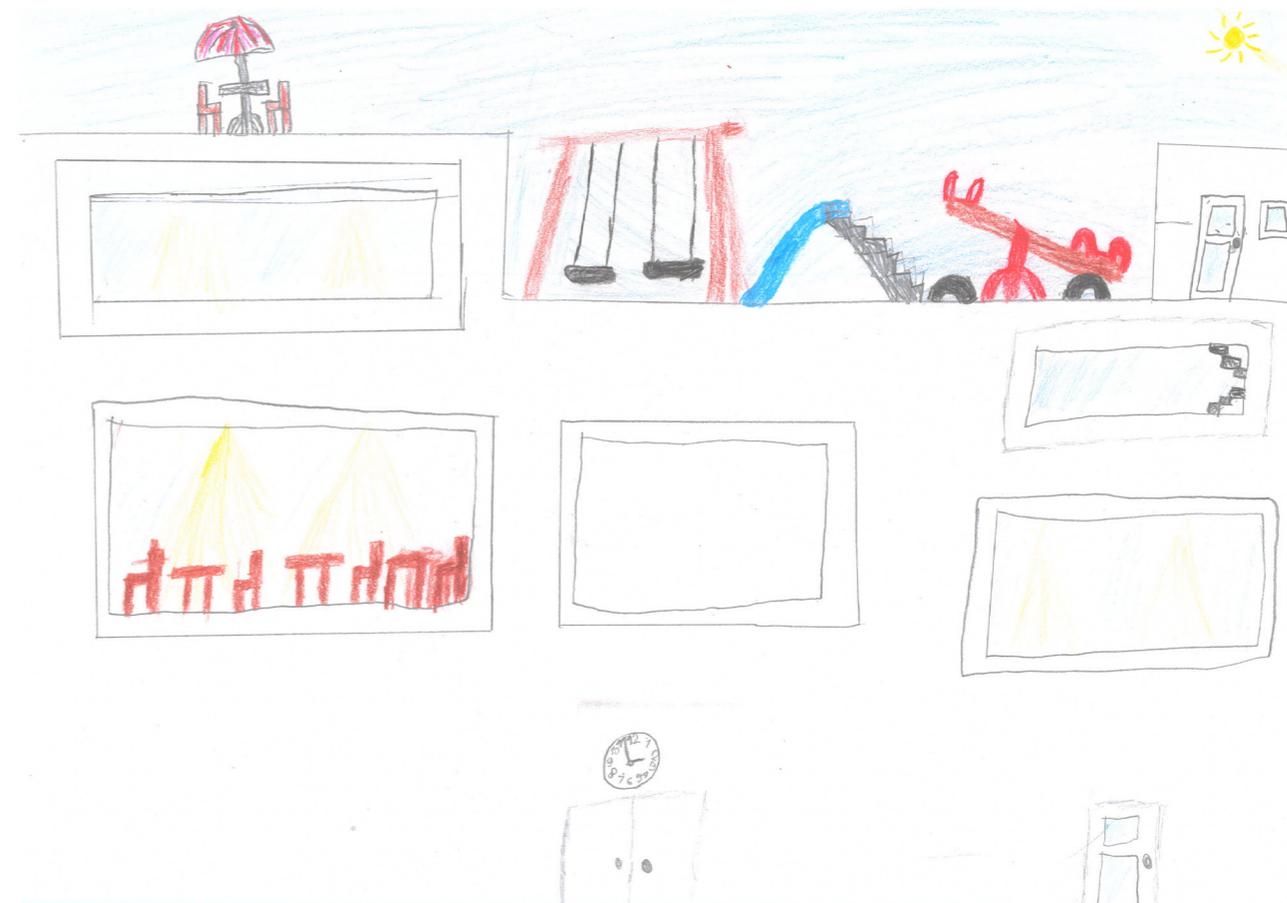
“Ik vond het moeilijk om gym te maken en een trap bij groep 5A.”

- Anonymous

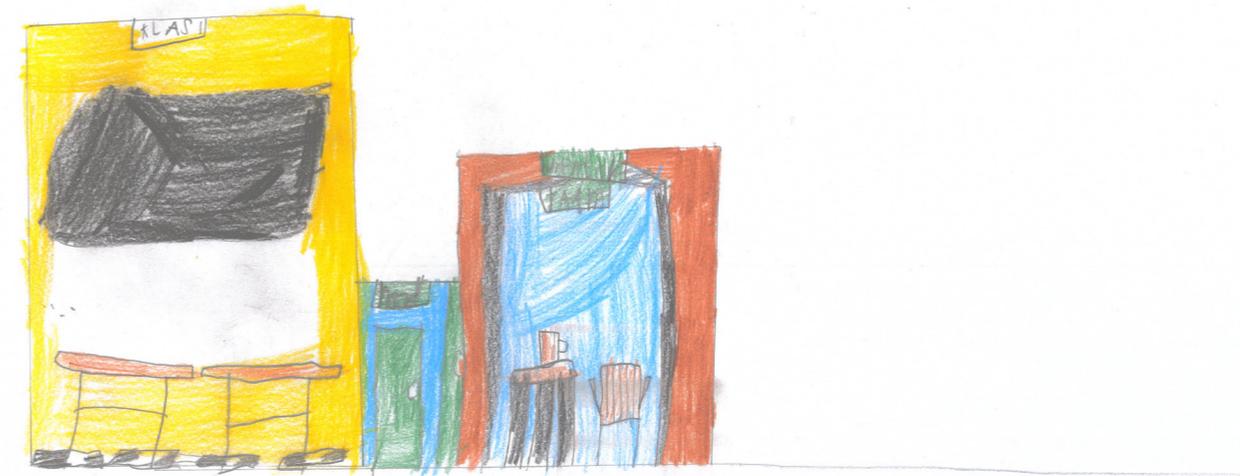
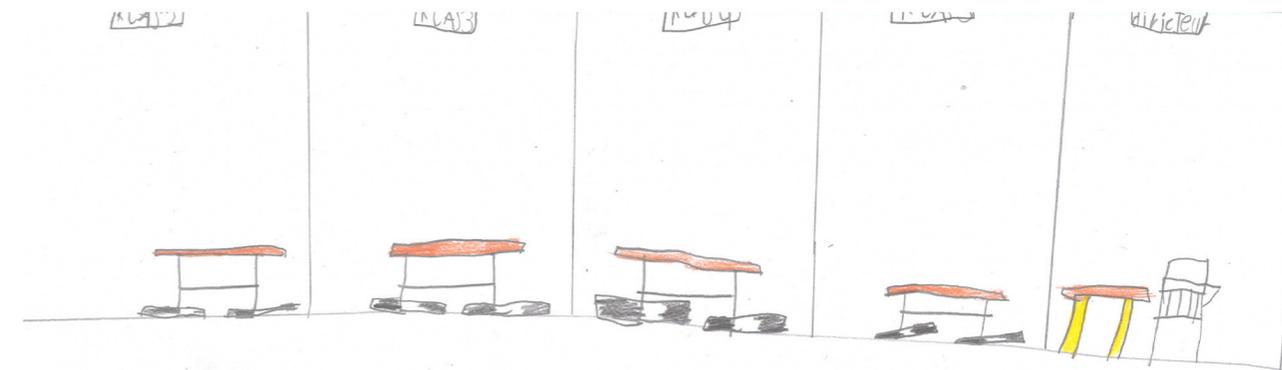


“Ik wil op het dak kunnen spelen.”

- Anonymous



- Anonymous



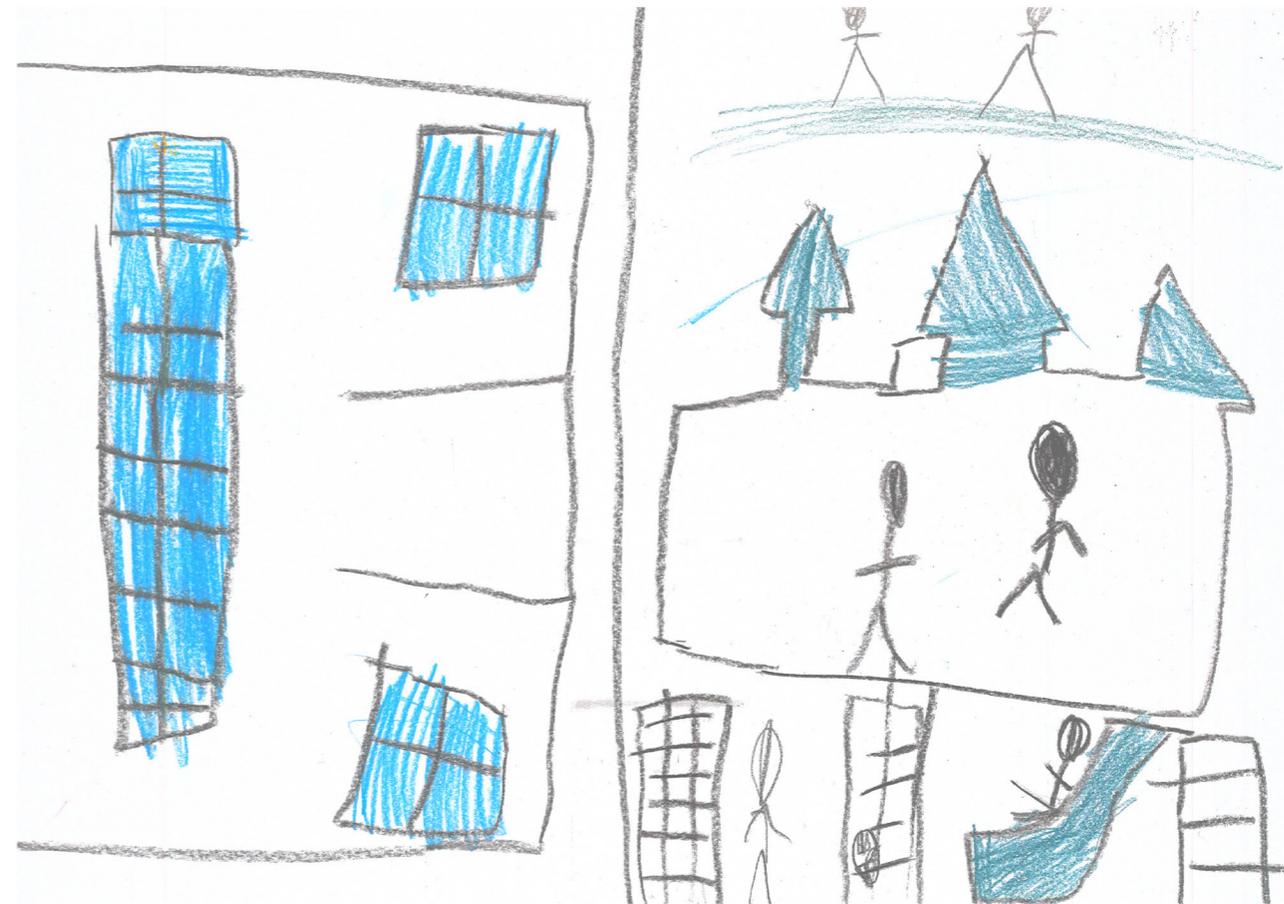
“(Bij de boom had ik geen bruin) Extra natuur!
Op het dak ligt gras.”

- Anonymous



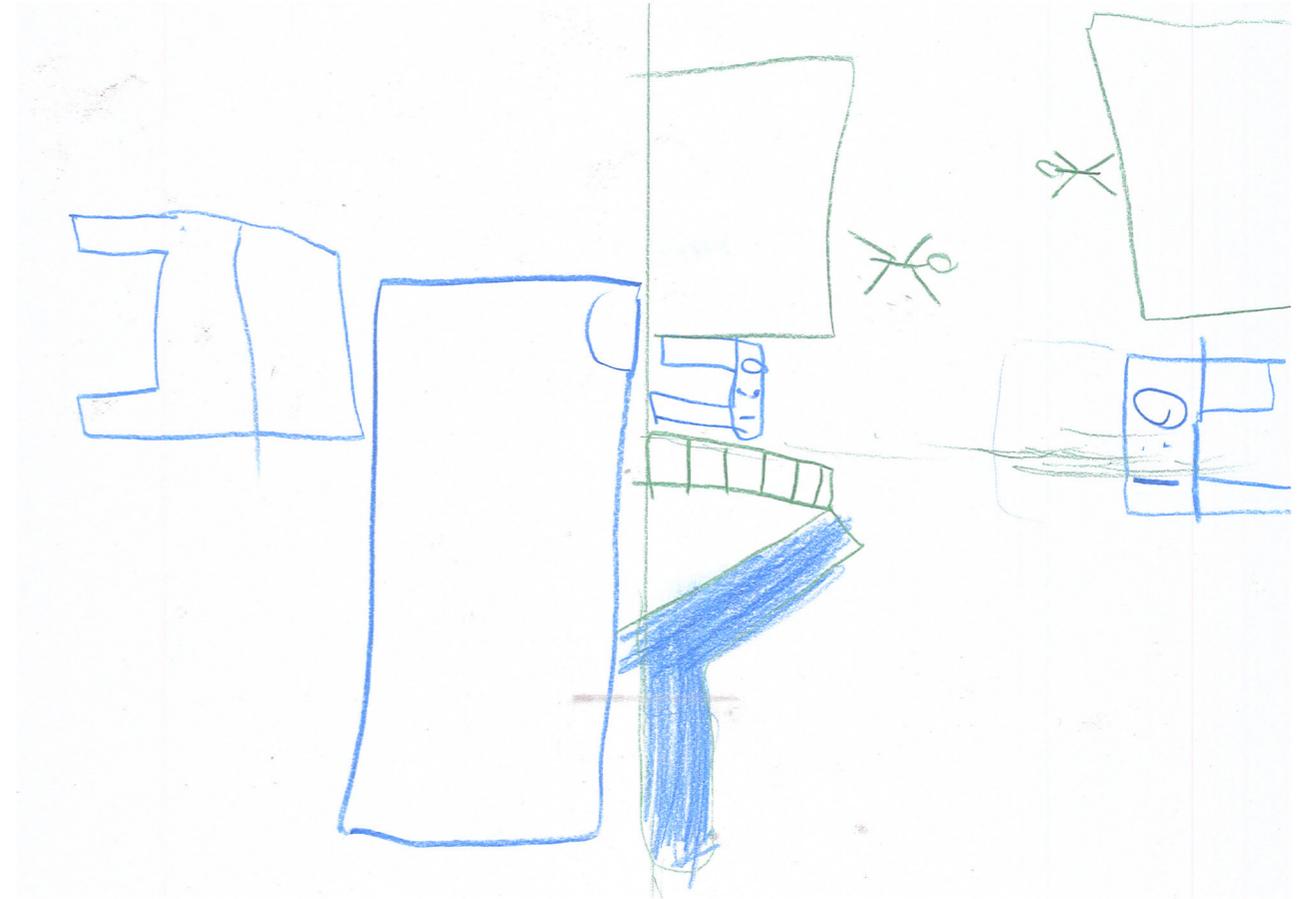
“Gras. Springkussen. Voetbalveld. Glijbaan.”

- Anonymous

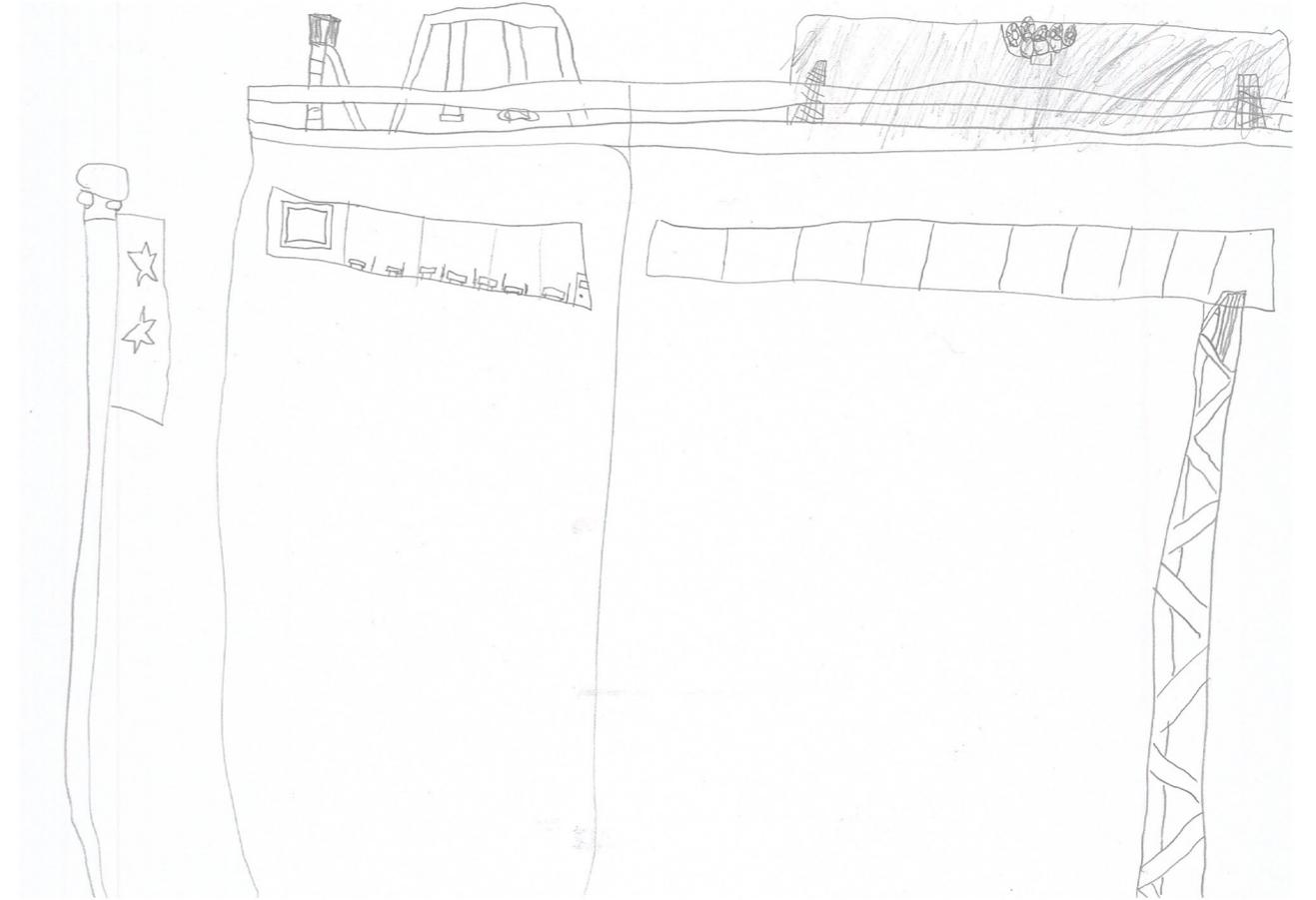


“Groot bos. Groot zwembad. Grote speeltuin.”

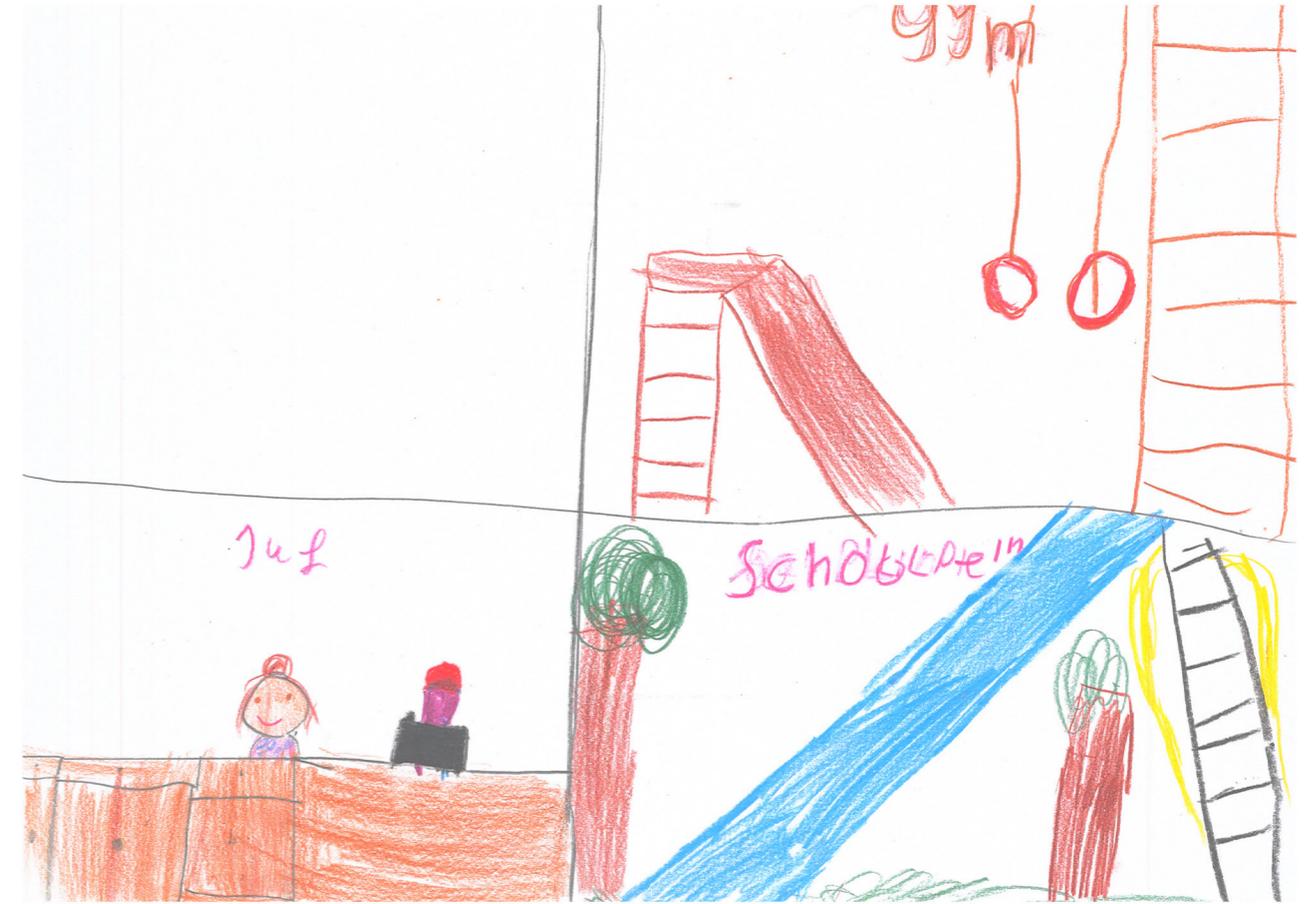
- Anonymous



- Anonymous

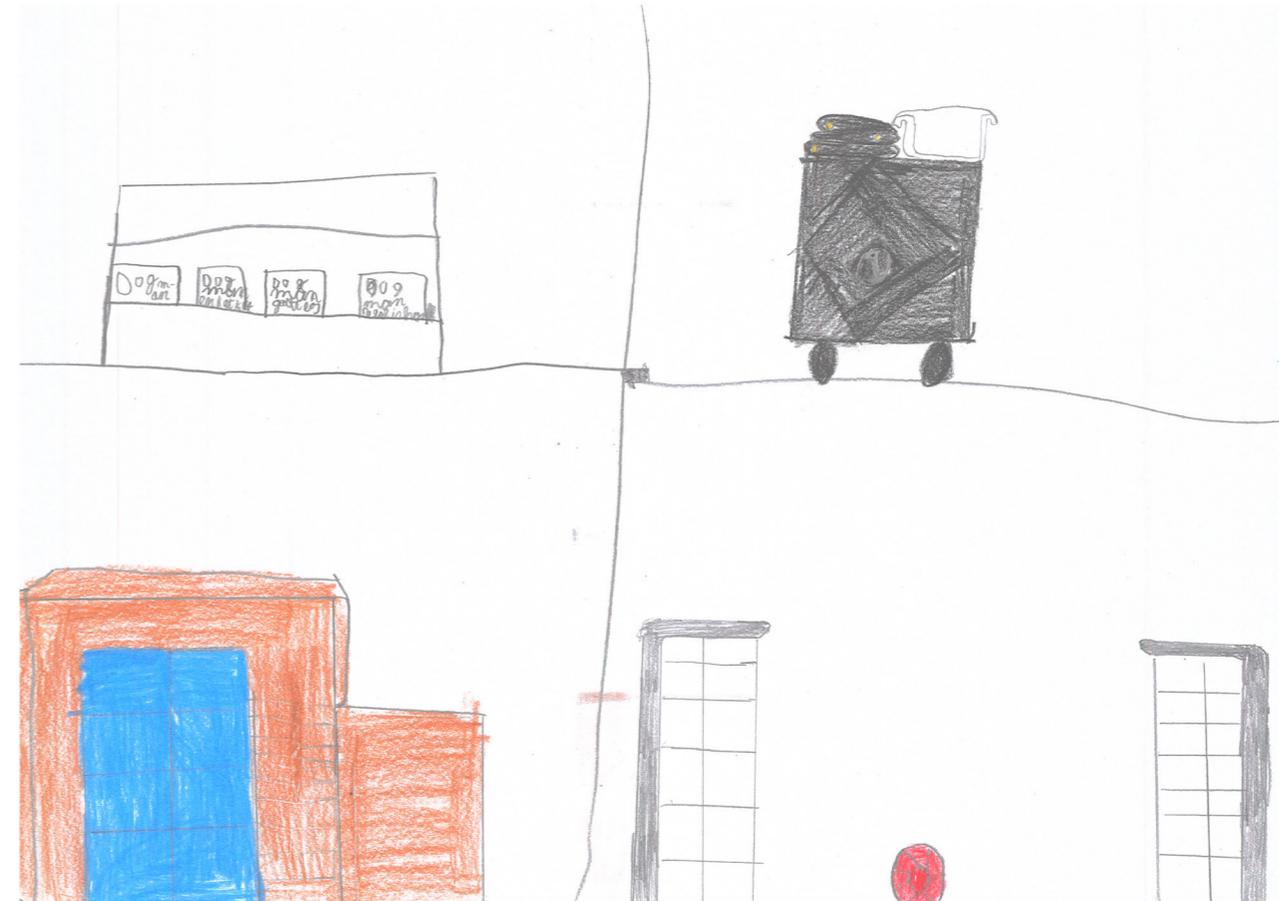


- Lotte, 6 years old



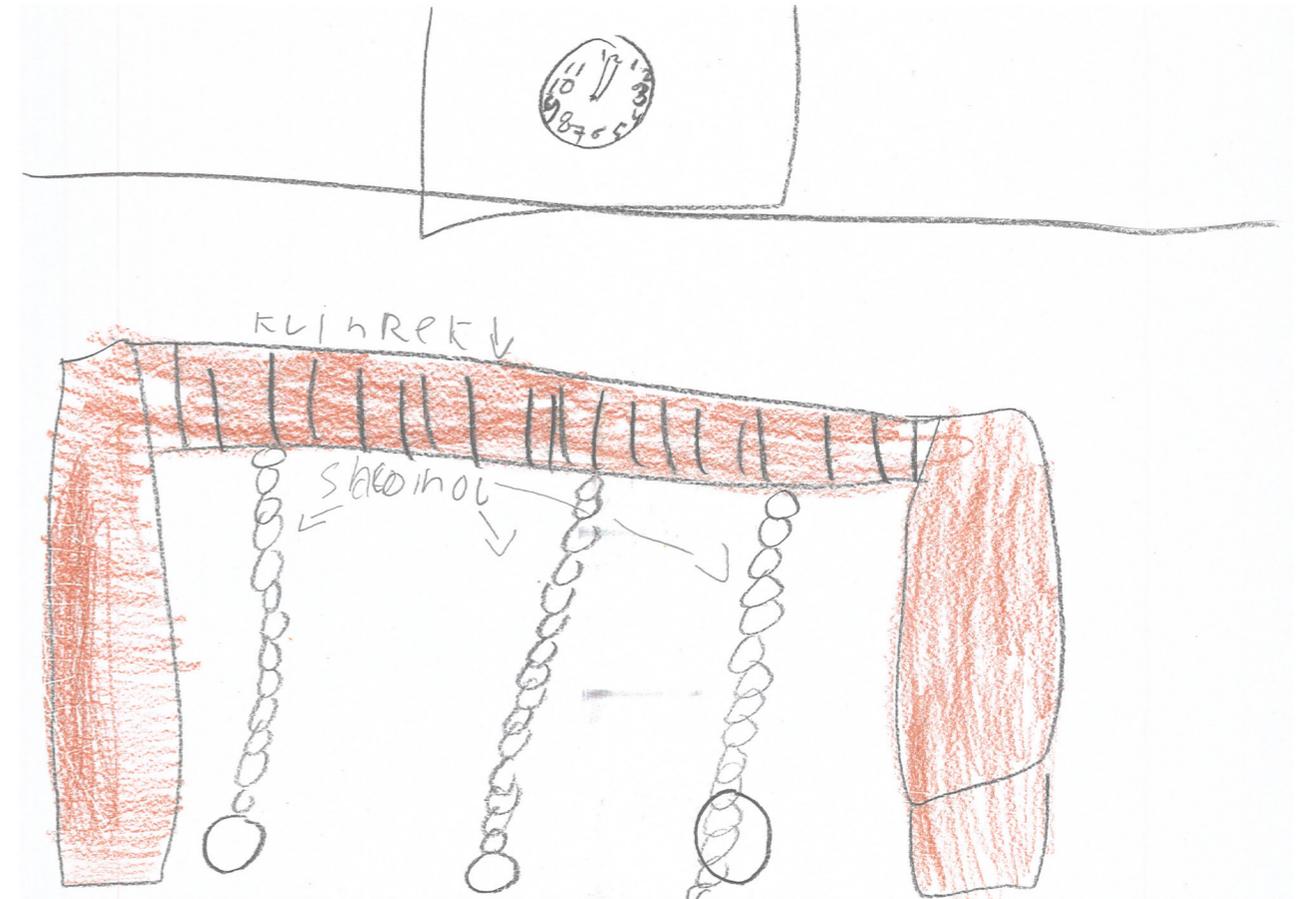
“De kopieermachine vind ik heel belangrijk.”

- Anonymous

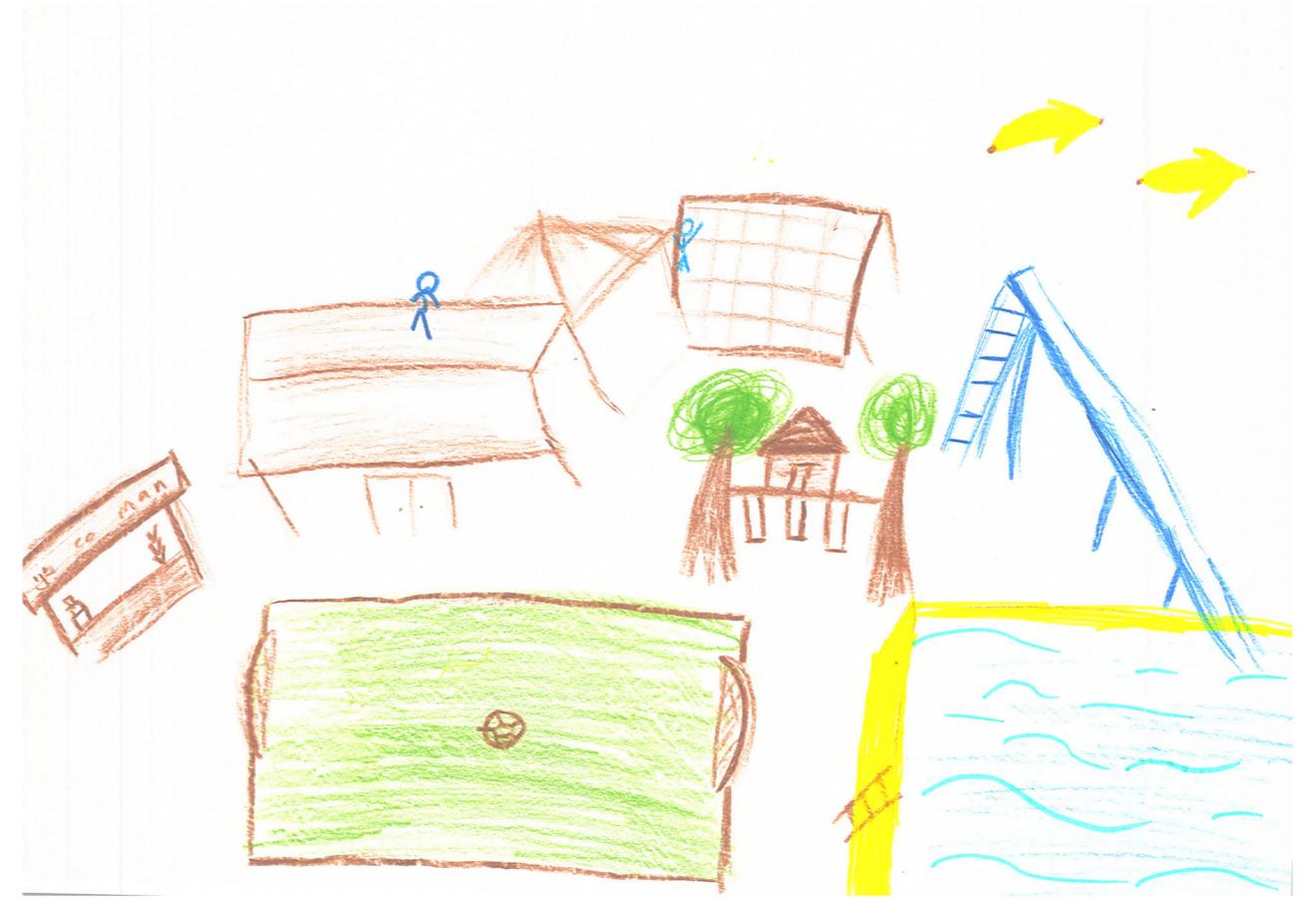


“Lianen, en de kelder is de geheime plek! Ik wil ook een zwembad”

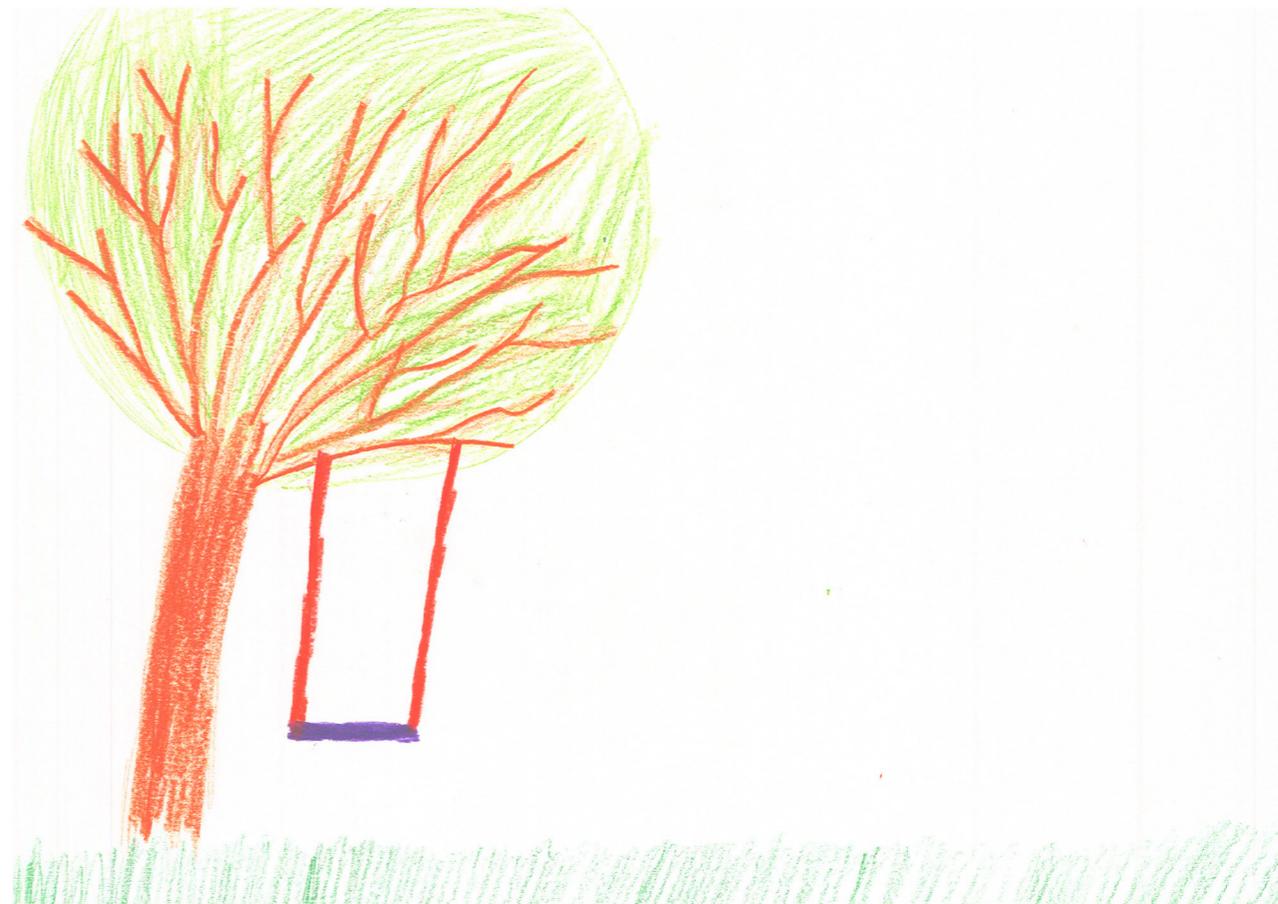
- Anonymous



- Anonymous



- Anonymous



“Dit is de school en dit zijn de klimrekken buiten.”

- Anonymous



“De trappen zijn leuk.”

- Lola, 6 years old

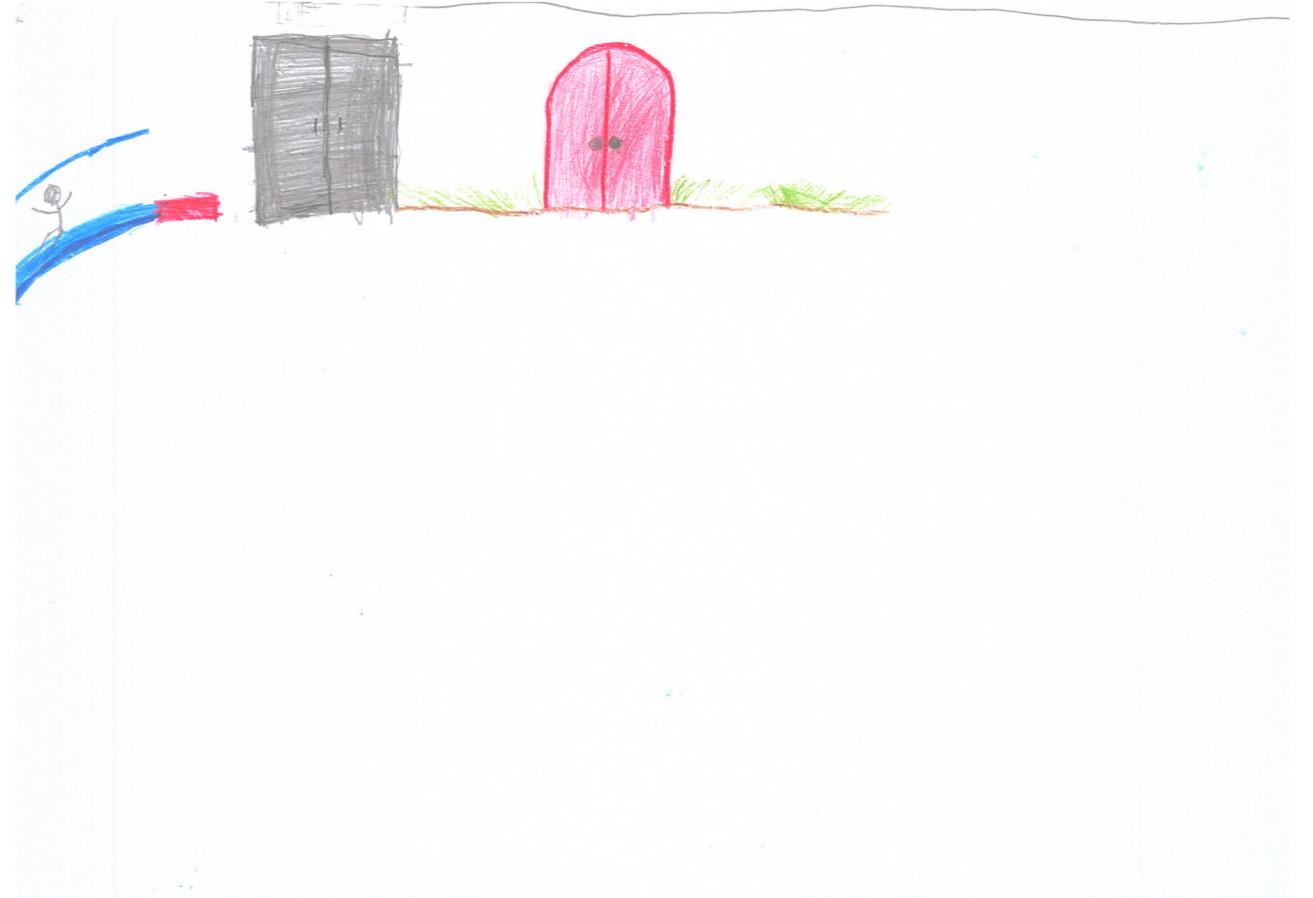


- Anonymous



“Ik houd niet van trappen. Mijn ideale school zou
alleen nog maar liften hebben en glijbanen.”

- Max, 9 years old



“In mijn ideale school heeft elke klas zijn eigen
kleur.”

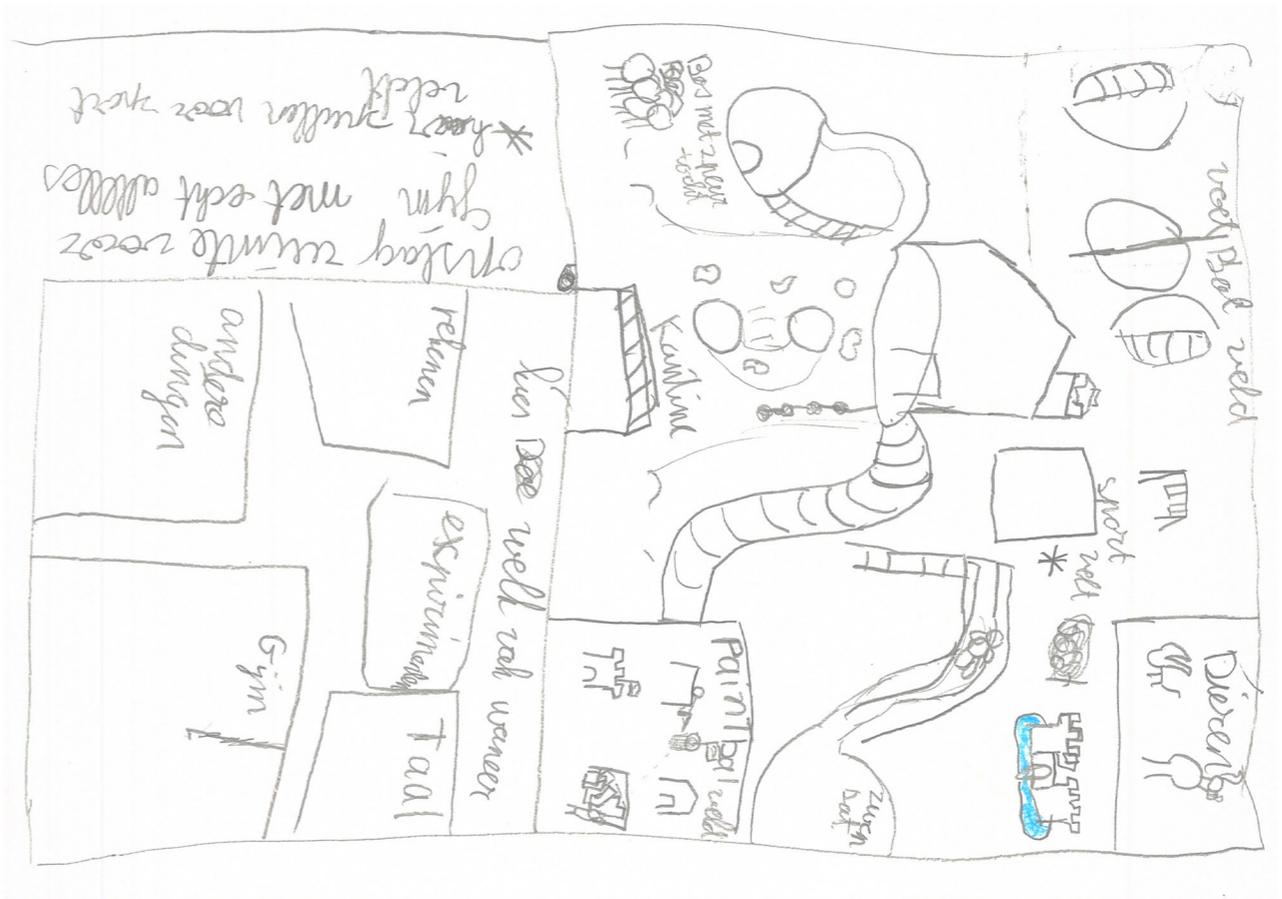
- Anonymous



“Ik wil heel graag een uitrust plek, verstopt van de anderen.”

- Anonymous





“Mijn school zou echt alllles hebben! Ik wil ook kiezen welk vak ik wil doen.”

- Jelle, 10 years old

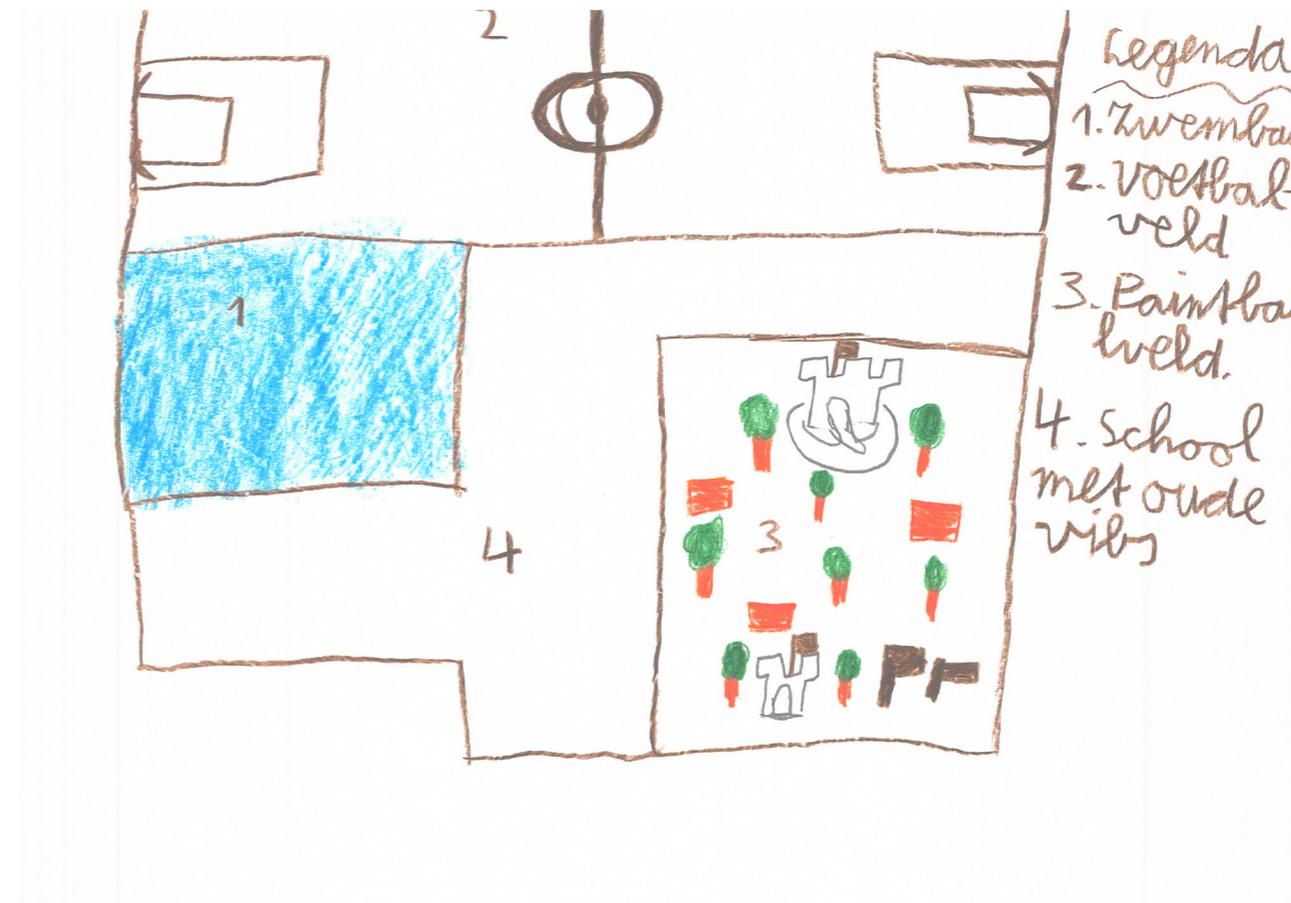
“Er moeten boeken zijn.”

- Anonymous



“Kijk! Deze dingen zou ik allemaal erbij willen,
maar de school moet dezelfde vibe houden.”

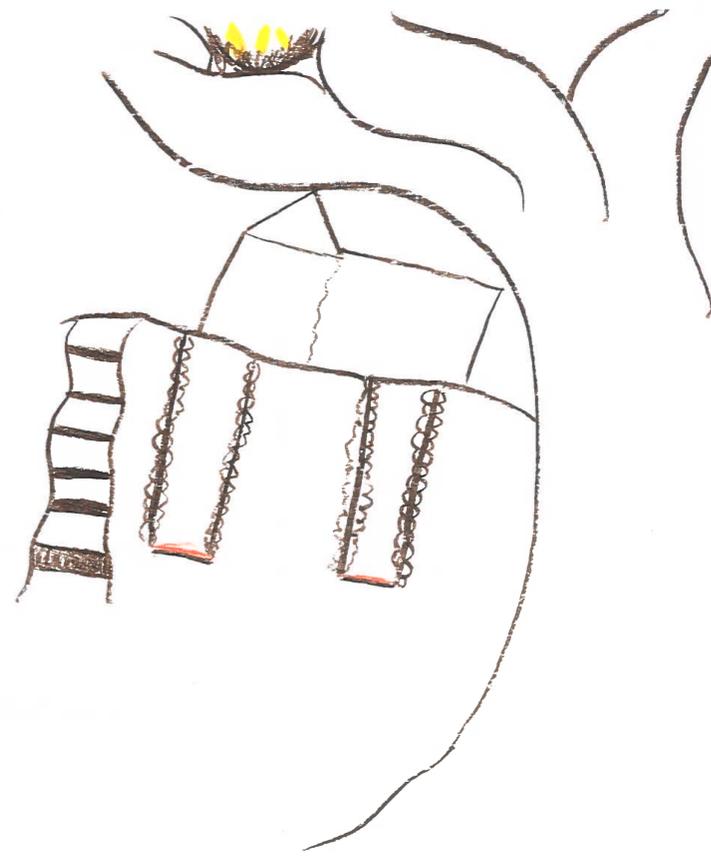
- Jacob, 8 years old



- Anonymous



- Zoë, 6 years old



“De jurk is te groot, maar dat ben ik. Ik sta naast
de schommel buiten met zon en wolken.”

- Wilke, 8 years old



“De sterren vond ik zelf gewoon mooi. Het is een klimrek met mij en haar (wijst naar vriendinnetje) buiten. Dit zijn bomen en dit is de schommel.”

- Joana, 6 years old



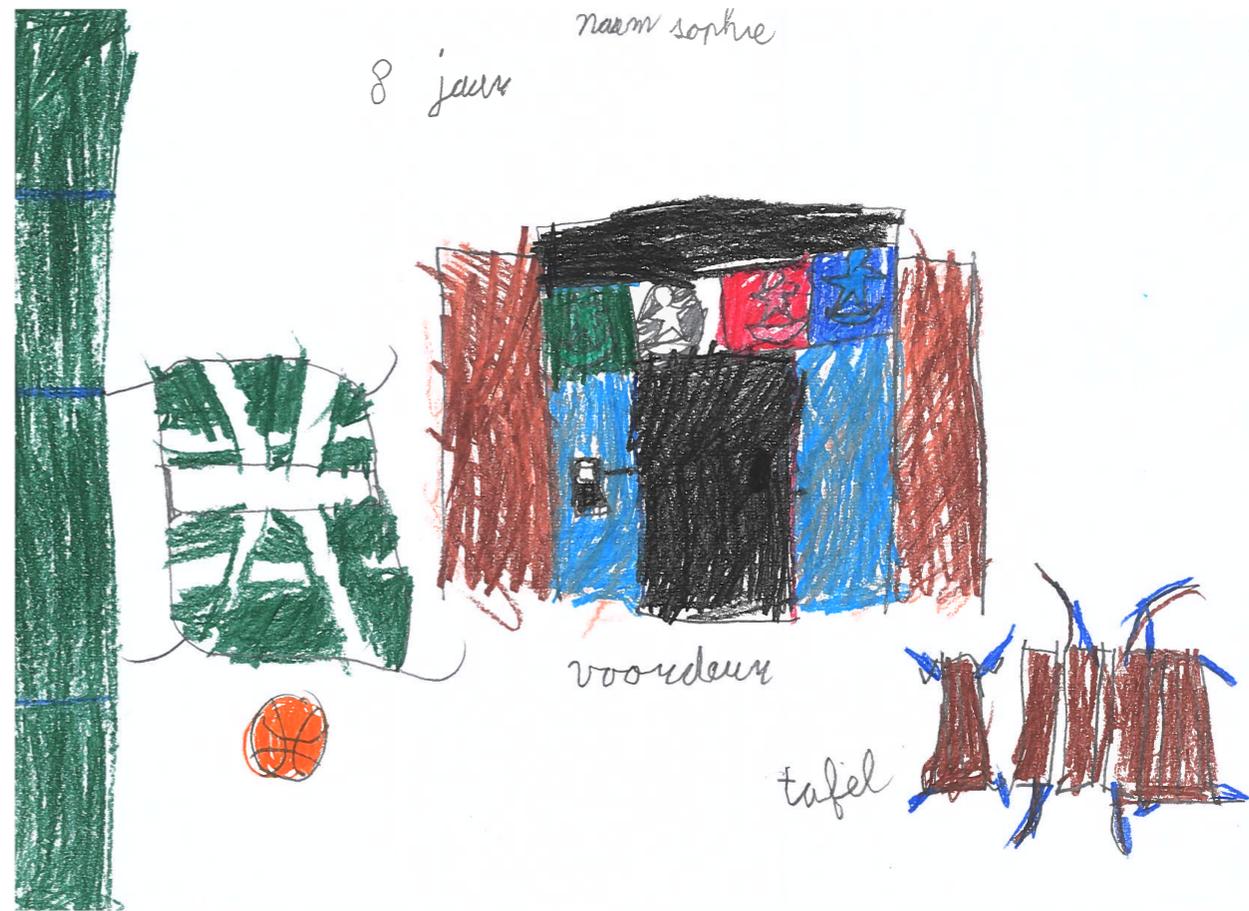
"We zijn buiten aan het spelen. Deze dingen staan op het schoolplein. De stenen, bomen, schommel. Dit zijn vrienden bij de rekken (linksboven)."

- Adan, 7 years old



“Ik heb de buitenkant van de school getekend.”

- Sophie, 8 years old



REFERENCES

Farokhi, M., & Hashemi, M. (2011). The Analysis of Children's Drawings: Social, Emotional, Physical, and Psychological aspects. *Science Direct*, WCPCG-2011. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.10.433>

